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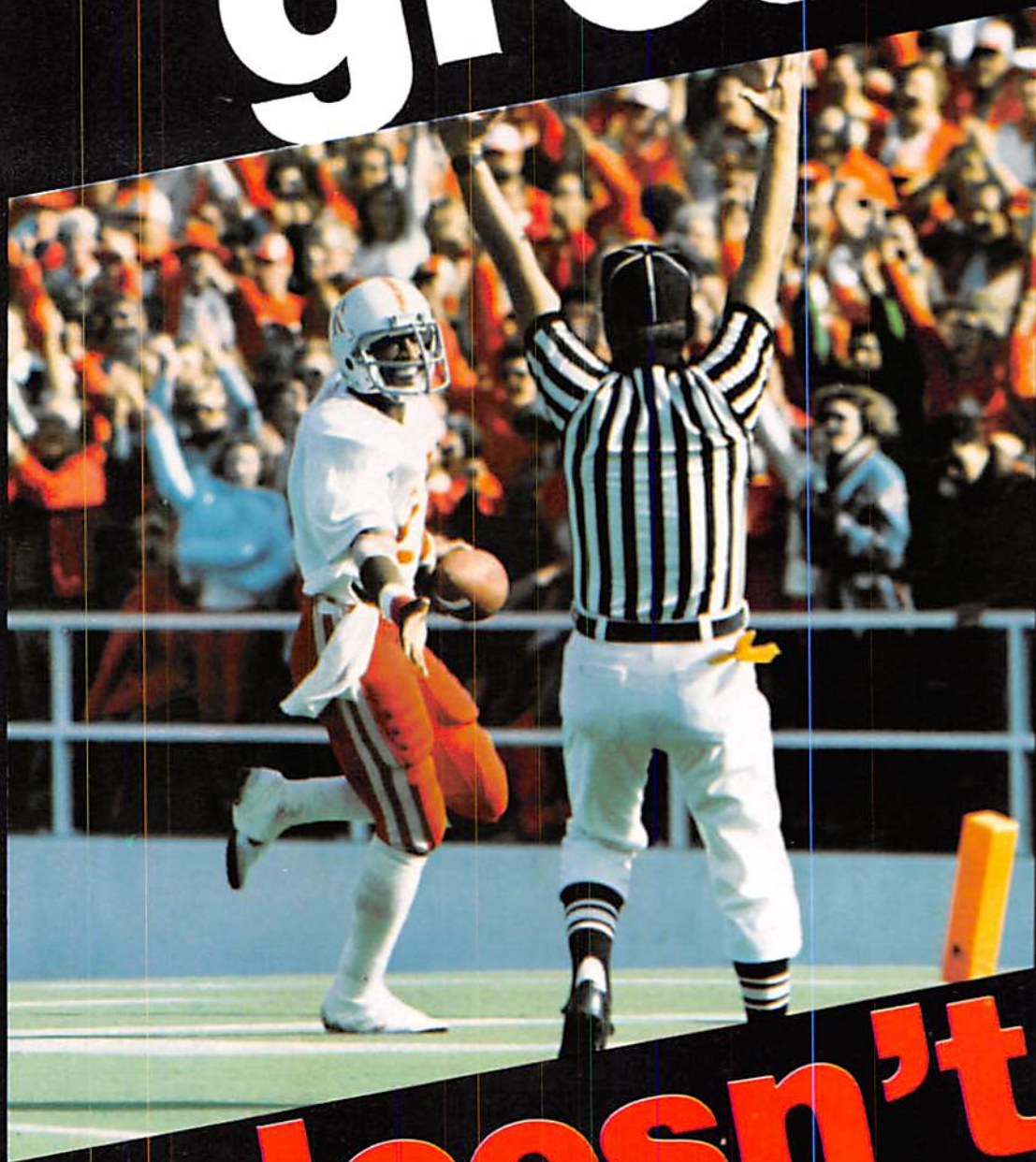
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# Huskers Illustrated

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## on the cover...

Clearly recovered from the ankle injury and subsequent surgery that shortened his 1981 season, junior quarterback Nate Mason was the leading rusher with 77 yards while directing the Reds in a 24-9 victory in the annual Spring Game.

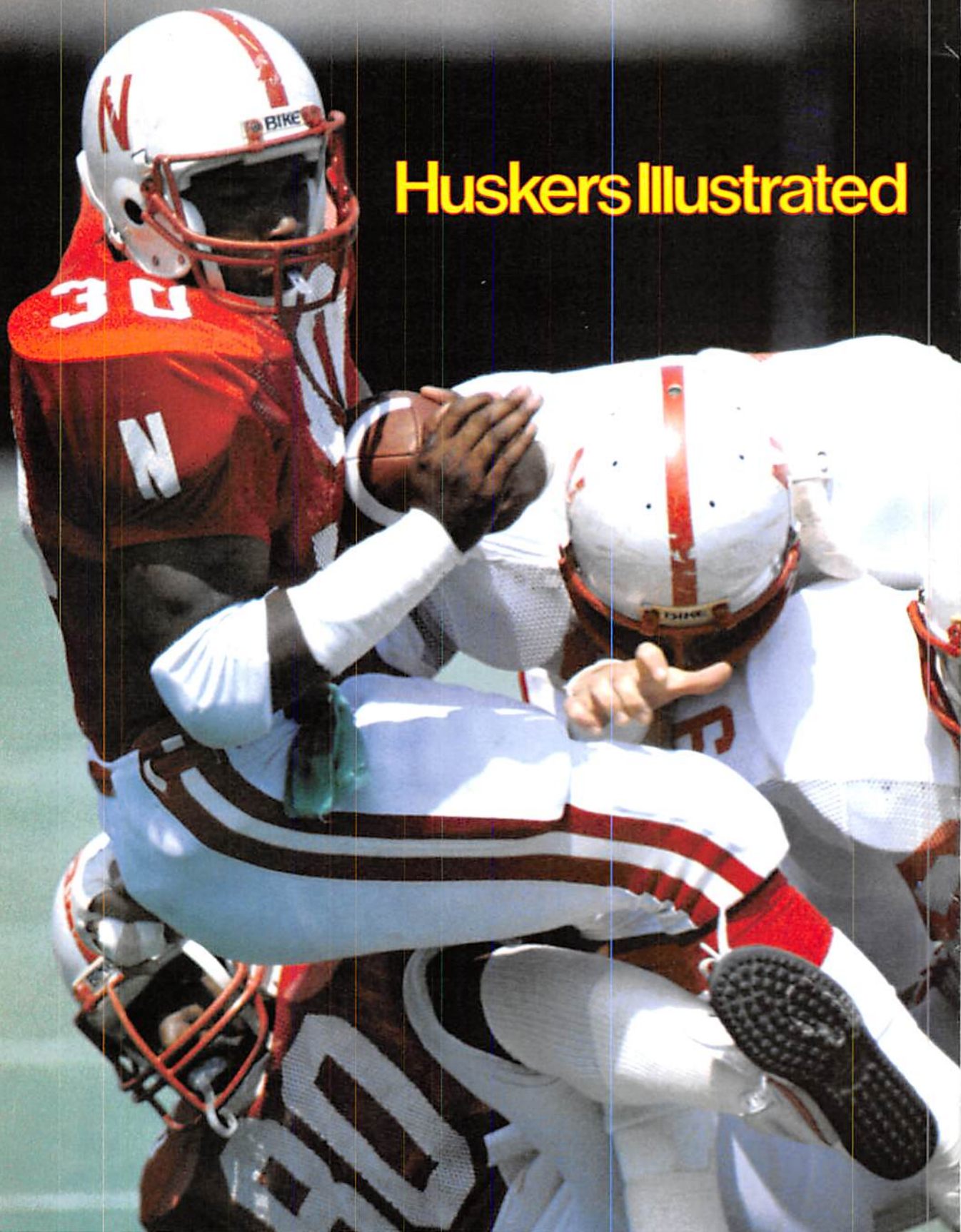
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# Spring Practice Problems Don't Look So Difficult Now

*Husker coaches were encouraged by defensive patchwork, but final exams won't come until fall. And Osborne expects a sterner test from the Big Eight.*

## Special to Huskers Illustrated

**T**ake away an all-American and first-round professional draft choice like Jimmy Williams, and you have a major void to fill, right?

"I may need a saliva test, but I think we're going to be stronger at defensive end," said George Darlington, who coaches those positions for the Cornhuskers and whose job it is to fill the Williams void.

Chalk up a major plus coming out of spring practice season that was disrupted by bad weather abnormally — high injuries.

Highest priority was developing replacements at end and in the secondary for the Big Eight Conference's top-ranked defense. Four senior starting backs were missing.

Secondary Coach Bob Thornton wouldn't go quite as far as Darlington, but he also ended the spring smiling.

"It came around to a point where I'm certainly not afraid to put them in a game. Every position seemed to solidify, and things are looking up," he said.

With six 1981 regulars missing from the Blackshirt ranks, Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride who tutors the line, said, "Overall, we have a long way to go to have national championship-type defense, but we have the people to

work at it. I feel better about the defense this year because they'll work better together. We don't have the 'name' players, the preseason all-Americans. They worked a lot harder than they have in the past. Aside from some injuries, the improvement was very good."

The offense didn't have as far to go. The only spots devoid of returning starters were fullback, where I-back stalwart Roger Craig made impressive strides, wingback and one guard and tackle.

"We need to get better at tackle, and we're a little thin at guard, but we have three starters back in the line where we normally have one or none," Head Coach Tom Osborne said.

"We have some talent overall, and we have more returning starters than normal, but everybody else in the league has as many or more. We have the potential to be a good team, but I'm not sure we're the best in the Big Eight. The league will be stronger by quite a bit," Osborne said.

The availability this fall of All-Big Eight quarterback Turner Gill, who missed the last two games last season with nerve damage in his right leg will be "a big factor. It will be a real plus if Turner is 95 to 100 percent well by August, but Nate Mason, Bruce Mathison and Craig Sundberg got in a lot of work in the spring and did well," Osborne said.

Thornton's secondary, which led the

nation in pass defense, was riddled by the loss of three-year starting cornerback Ric Lindquist, two-year regular monster Sammy Sims, cornerback Rodney Lewis, who started parts of two seasons, and three-letter safety Jeff Krejci.

"We can be as good eventually, but that eventually may not be this year," Thornton said. "Pure talent-wise, we fall off at one corner, but experience is more important than raw ability. You bet it is.

"We've got more depth, and they're going to be great. Bret Clark is going to be a tremendous safety, and Neal Harris is going to be a tremendous corner," Thornton said. Clark, of Nebraska City, and Harris, of Kansas City, Kan., are coming off redshirt sophomore seasons.

Senior Allen Lyday, who shared a corner position with Lewis last year, "is as good as Rodney," and senior Kris Van Norman "doesn't drop off at monster," he said.

Lyday and Lexington junior Jim Murphy finished the spring as the top cornerbacks with Harris as a swing man. Former I-back Dave Burke "will jump in there somewhere," Thornton said.

Senior Tim Holbrook, Murphy's old Lexington teammate, is an experienced hand behind Van Norman, and third-year man Pat Larsen was moved to safety with Clark from a corner.

California junior college transfer



Kevin Biggers was impressive in trials at cornerback and monster and will face a redshirt decision this fall.

"These guys hit better than last year's secondary. They're bigger," Thornton said. "We felt last year that part of the time we weren't intimidating enough. We emphasized hitting more in the spring. When you hit people, they should fall backwards."

Darlington's optimism stems from quality depth, despite the loss of Williams. "We're looking to rotate four guys pretty much equally. We want them to go like raving maniacs for about two series and then put fresh ones in."

"That's a luxury, and it can give us depth a few years down the road. They might not be the four who ended up one-two during the spring."

Darlington's crew is ahead of last year's because "we didn't know who the right end would be until the third game," he said.

That turned out to be Tony Felici, who became an all-conference player. Felici, a 205-pound senior from Omaha, "improved in the spring. He has excellent strength for his size. He jacks those guys up when he hits," Darlington said.

True sophomore Scott Strasburger "has great speed (4.61) and agility," Darlington said and came on to press Felici.

The other side ended in a dead heat between letterman sophomore Bill Weber, coming off an injury, and seasoned junior Wade Praeuner, who was "probably the most improved during the spring. Part of it was due to moving him from right to left end, where he appears to be more comfortable," Darlington said.

The top challengers were West Point junior Dave Ridder and former defensive back Eric Buchanan, who was red-shirted last year. Ridder is the strongest end but needs to improve his pass drop. "When we play a running team, he'll play a lot," Darlington said.

The problem in the defensive line "is still going to be depth," McBride said, although the outlook at middle guard improved dramatically with the surge of Mike Tranmer, a non-recruited walk-on junior from Lyons.

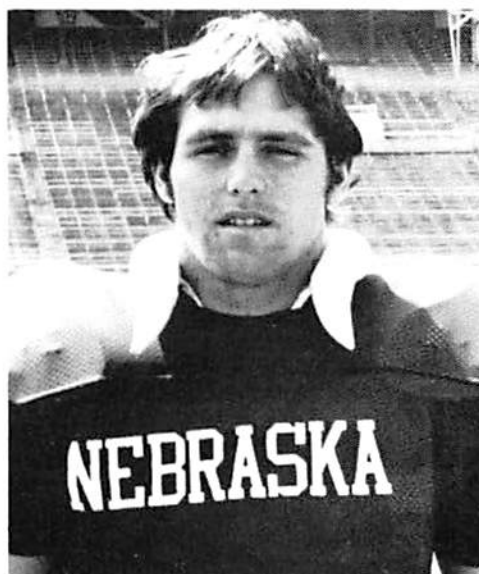
With holdover regular Jeff Merrell missing much of the work because of an injury, Tranmer "was our most improved lineman," McBride said. "He's a hard worker, and he's been around. He's strong and quick and aggressive.



*Doug Wilkening*



*Bret Clark*



*Doug Herrmann*

He really progressed all of a sudden.

"Merrell is really going to have to push himself if he wants to play. Ken Graeber (Minneapolis soph) has a long way to go, but he came on the last week, and Kenny Shead (Plano, Tex., soph) is going to be a player."

McBride is blessed with the return of senior left tackle Toby Williams, "and I was most pleased with the way Toby played," he said. Veteran Tom Gdowski proved his value behind Williams but was sidelined the last two weeks, and letterman junior Mike Keeler "had a real good spring" on the left side, McBride said.

Junior Doug Herrmann, a 260-pound former fullback from Custer, S.D., emerged as the heir apparent to Henry Waechter at right tackle, "but he needs to get stronger. I think he will. With Herrmann and Toby in there, we're as good as we've been. Both can move, and they're smart," McBride said.

The big question is whether soph Rob Stuckey of Lexington can rebound from a knee injury to spell Herrmann. "If he can't, we have some deep problems," McBride said.

Keeler is capable of playing on both sides, "and it's not out of the realm of possibility that a freshman coming in could play," McBride said.

With an experienced crew like Steve Damkroger, Brent Evans, Steve McWhirter (who missed spring after knee surgery) and Mike Knox, Linebacker Coach John Melton's major chore was to develop depth. "I feel better," he said after the spring game. Sophomores Mark Daum of Dix and Dan Ripa of Omaha, who was shifted from fullback, came along, "and Rob Debus (Lincoln soph) will give us some help," Melton said.

The offensive line "is farther ahead than last year in terms of knowing who will start. Some kids have declared. We have some talent there," Line Coach Milt Tenopir said.

Center Dave Rington, guard Mike Mandelko and tackle Randy Theiss, all seniors, declared two years ago.

"The biggest concern we had was at one guard spot. Right now, Dean Steinkuhler (Burr junior) and Kurt Glathar (Lincoln senior) have filled that adequately. We definitely have three guards who can play. We have to find a fourth and fifth.

"Tackle was a little surprising. We have a little more depth in pretty good football players than I thought,"





Wade Praeuner



Mike Tranmer



Neil Harris

Tenopir said.

Theiss and two-letter senior Jeff Kwapick finished in the top spots, with Bellevue soph Mark Traynowicz as a swing man. John Sherlock and Scott Raridon were next in line.

Sherlock, a junior from Omaha South, "improved as much as anyone we have," Tenopir said.

Center Rimington, the Outland Trophy winner, "probably had the best spring he's ever had" after considering turning pro and undergoing minor knee surgery, Tenopir said.

There was some discussion about moving backup center Brad Johnson to guard because his talents have been squandered behind Rimington, "but center is such a critical position, we didn't want to go with just Rimington. But we want to play Brad more," Tenopir said.

The receiving positions were in good hands with veterans Todd Brown, Ricky Simmons and Tom Vergith at split end and youngsters Todd Kimball and Scott Schoettger behind them and with holdover tight ends Jamie Williams and Mitch Krenk.

All-purpose wingback Anthony Steels was missing, but his replacement is a proven game breaker in junior Irving Fryar. Lincolnite Tom Curry was the backup before he was injured late in

the spring, and sophs Jim Thompson of Blair and Shane Swanson of Hershey showed ability.

Backfield Coach Mike Corgan "knew a lot about" Craig and Mike Rozier, his I-backs who accumulated over 2,000 yards last season. So he concentrated on finding backups.

Letterman Tim Brungardt of Norfolk "is a tougher, stronger runner than Jeff Smith (Wichita soph), but Jeff is quicker and maybe has an edge in pass receiving. And Will Curtis (walkon soph from Baltimore) had some pretty good days, so it's pretty good at I-back," Corgan said.

Fullback "is going to depend on how much we run Roger there. I'd guess not more than 25 percent. Fullback is a little different breed of cat. Roger got used to doing things pretty tall and having time to see things develop," he said.

Was the experiment successful?

"I don't know the answer yet," Corgan said. "He can probably handle the running part. I want to look at it some more. Roger went at it diligently as hell, which is in his favor. It will make a better I-back out of him."

"If I had my way, every I-back would play fullback for a while — learn about hauling that plow."

Littleton, Colo., junior Doug Wilkening ended the spring as the No. 1

fullback, followed by upstart Mark Schellen of Waterloo, who walked on last fall and stormed through the winter conditioning program with a school record bench press of 475 pounds and ran a 4.6 40.

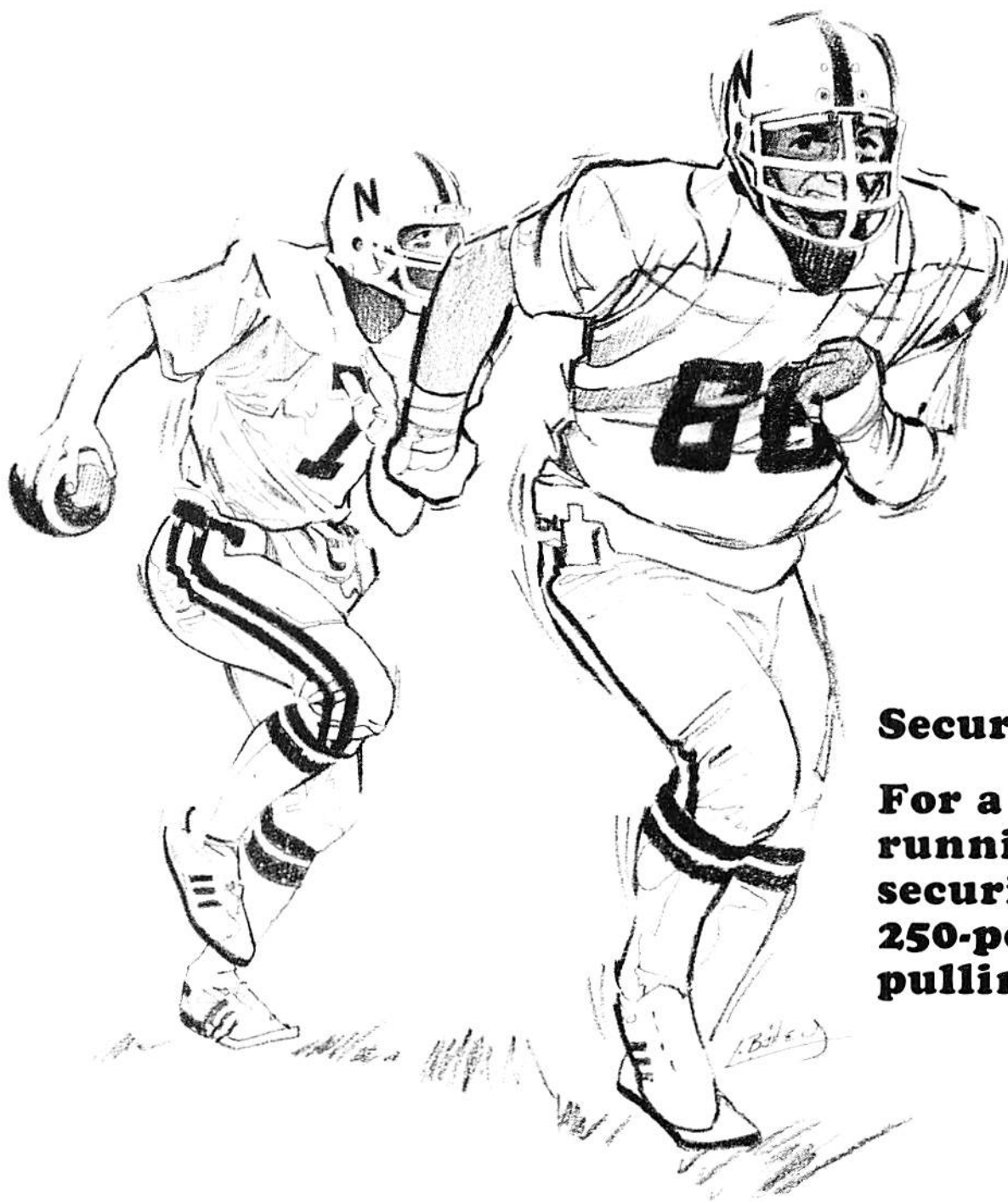
"We should have played Wilkening more last year. There never was a time when he hurt us. Schellen was a real pleasant surprise. He just appeared on the scene."

"He had a pretty good looking bunch of stats, and I had pretty good suspicions that some of this might happen. He came in last fall overweight and worked on the scout team. He was splashing people around pretty good, and he didn't even know the plays," Corgan said.

Mark Moravec, a senior with two letters is the smallest of the fullbacks, "but he's knowledgeable, and he can play I-back, too," he said. Grand Island soph Tom Rathman, who played some as a freshman, "will hit as good as any of them, but he needs to get finer. He missed six blocks in the spring game, and you don't do that," Corgan said.

With Grant Campbell and Kevin Seibel back at punter and place kicker, respectively, and returners Fryar, Rozier and Simmons still on hand, Osborne said, "Most elements of the kicking game are in good shape." ●





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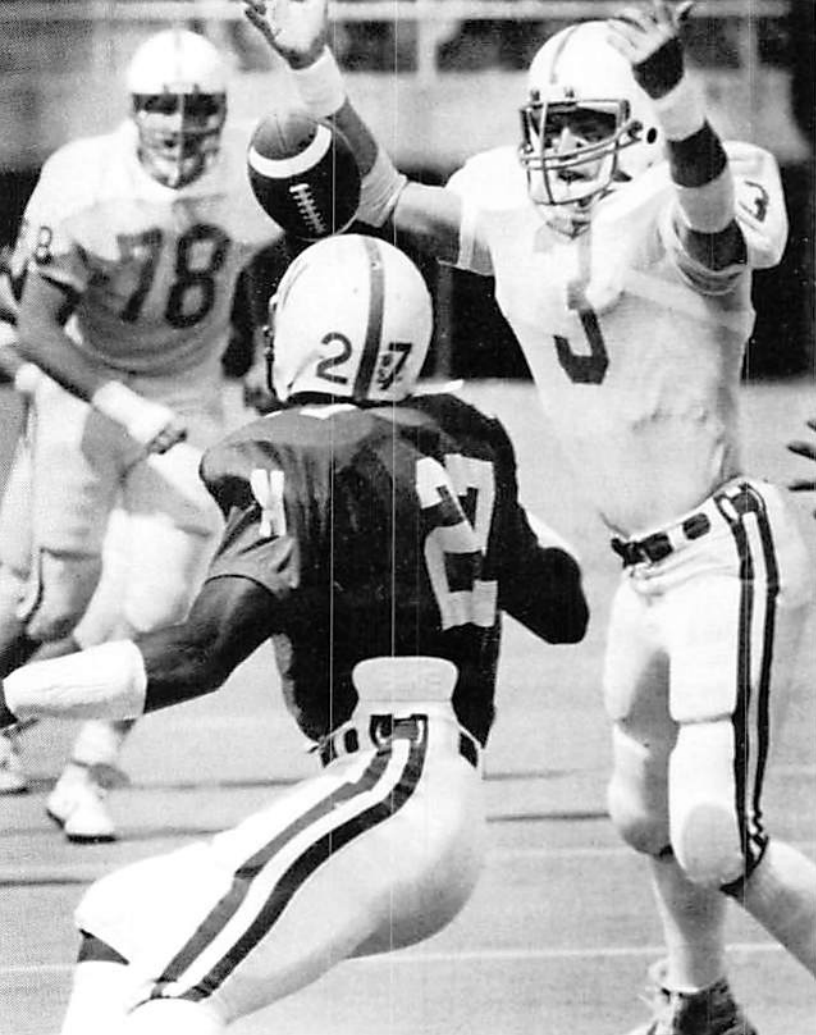
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Irving Fryar of Reds battles Pat Larsen for pass.

## There Is Quarterback Life Beyond Turner Gill At NU

*It was Mason by land and Sundberg by air as quarterbacks provided most of the pizzazz in a Spring Game with few dramatics; the Reds won as expected, 24-9.*

By Tom Ash

**T**he underdog Whites were on the move; the Reds, the best defenders on the team that will defend the Big Eight championship this fall, were in retreat.

Spring Game '82, the showcase event after 19 rehearsals, was moments into the second half, and the trailing White team had crossed the midline after receiving the kickoff. Quarterback Craig Sundberg had completed a couple of nifty passes for 25 yards.

On third-and-five, Sundberg winged another one over the middle. It was a tad high, and split end Tom Vergith extended to his fullest, exposed and vulnerable as the ball smacked into his palms.

Instantly, he was sandwiched violently by safety Bret Clark and cornerback Allen Lyday.

Almost miraculously, Vergith held on. He dusted himself off and returned to the huddle, all the more wary.

The drive carried to the 6, where Sundberg again pitched to Vergith, a step beyond the goal line. Touchdown.

No. Before Vergith came down, cornerback Neil Harris and end Scott Strasburger arrived. With force. The ball rolled free.

Two more passing failures, and the Whites had to be content with a field goal.

The secondary was the major worry when Nebraska's spring practice opened. Four senior regulars were gone.

For an expert's opinion, who better than Tom Vergith, a senior-to-be who has been bounced around by Big Eight secondaries for two years?

"We have a real strong secondary. That's why I have sore ribs," Vergith testified after the Reds, comprised of the first and fourth teams, whacked the Whites, second and third units, 24-9, in the 33rd annual spring bash.

"They really laid the wood to me. The guys we put on the field are as good as anyone. In an organization like this, just to stick around, you have to be a good athlete and have the competitive spirit. There was good evidence of that today," Vergith said.

For dramatics, Spring Game '82 was a piker compared with most others in the Osborne Era.

It didn't measure up to the Whites' 22-21 upset a year earlier, provided by Turner Gill's 11-yard touchdown and two-point conversion runs with 24 seconds left.

Or the 14-13 White victory on Dean Sukup's field goal with 19 seconds remaining in 1978.

Or the Reds' 23-21 escape in 1977 when the Whites' Keith Steward was stopped on a two-point try with 1:35 to go.

Or the Whites' 29-26 win in '76 on a Randy-Garcia-Kenny Brown pass at 1:19 and a missed field goal by the Reds' Ron VanderMeer at :14.

Or the free-for-all when the Reds snuffed a two-point attempt in the last 1:20 to win 41-40.

The 33 points and 585 total yards this spring were not as offensive as the 1980 Huskers compiled when the Reds won, 38-19, or as Tom Osborne's first team managed with a combined 505 rushing



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White wingback Jim Thompson tries to avoid Mike Tranmer.



Bill Patterson of Whites fights off Kent McCallum for first down.

yards as the Reds won, 35-25.

Osborne conceded that the spring preview "wasn't spectacular," but there were ample reasons why it was plain vanilla.

Continuity on both sides was deystroyed by an inordinate number of injuries. Three of the top six quarterbacks were held out, and Reds starter Nate Mason was ordered to pass sparingly because of a sore shoulder. Option plays, a vital offensive staple, were held to a minimum.

Because spring game films will be exchanged with opening opponent Iowa, the Cornhuskers also revealed only plays they had used last fall. "We only showed 60 to 70 percent of our offense, and the defense was limited to about 60 percent," Osborne said.

Overall, Osborne was "pleased with the effort and the fact that nobody else was hurt and displeased with the penalties (13 for 98 yards) and fumbles (16, 9 lost). But we used a lot of third and fourth teamers, and you can excuse those a little bit down the line."

Still, there was plenty to cheer for the 23,116 gathered at Memorial Stadium (that was Sports Information Director Don Bryant's official "estimate." Osborne said it looked closer to 26,000 to him):

— The faithful were introduced to a new secondary loaded with fierce tacklers, led by most-seasoned seniors Lyday, who had a 33-yard interception return, and Kris Van Norman, Lexington High teammates Tim Holbrook and Jim Murphy and soph stars-in-waiting Clark of Nebraska City and Harris of Kansas City, Kan.

"The secondary has made some progress; it's not great yet, but it's a lot better," Osborne said.

— Those in attendance also learned that there is, indeed, quarterback life beyond Turner Gill.

Junior Mason, the Texan whose 1981 season was ended by ankle surgery after the fourth game, showed a reluctance to pass because of the sore wing, but his 13 carries netted a game-high 77 yards.

Sophomore Sundberg, out of Lincoln Southeast, came off a redshirt year to complete eight of 17 passes worth 89 yards for the Whites. After directing the underdogs 80 yards to the aforementioned field goal in the third quarter, he switched shirts and took the Reds 80 yards to a touchdown. Sundberg completed four of five for 52 yards with the first team.

Other treats:

— Gill, the All-Big Eight quarterback as a soph and subject of much worry because of leg nerve damage that took him out of the Oklahoma and Orange Bowl games, appeared in a supporting role, as a holder for Kevin Seibel's place kicks. Gill had made vast improvement throughout the spring, but he was held out of scrimmages. Osborne instructed him to let the ball go if the snaps were not perfect and told officials to blow a quick whistle to protect him.

— Roger Craig, who has made his name as an I-back, made his public debut at fullback in the second quarter. His blocking helped I-back Tim Brungardt pick up 44 yards on six carries in a drive that ended with a fumble at the White 8.

— All-American center Dave Rim-

ington added pass receiving to his list of talents when he won a jump ball on a tipped Mason pass. Rimington was downed immediately, and the play was nullified by a penalty. Still, the big guy did his best impression of a hotdog receiver, passing the ball between his legs and flipping it over his shoulder. "I thought about running it, but it was kinda congested. I went down right quick. I figure one miracle at a time. Next time, I'll try to run with it," he said.

— Split end Todd Brown, the leading receiver with three for 51 yards, drew an ovation when he took a short pass, was met solidly at the White 5 by junior college transfer cornerback Kevin Biggers and muscled his way into the end zone.

— The Reds, leading 24-9 in the fourth quarter, pulled a successful on-side kickoff when only the kicker knew it was coming because of a misinterpretation.

— The Whites answered that insult with the old Fumbleroosky play, but guard Anthony Thomas, who gained 20 yards on a similar intentional fumble play the year before, never got a chance and was smeared this time.

The favored Reds established their superiority immediately with a 12-play drive that covered 64 yards. Mason, however, fumbled at the White 4, and Seibel opened scoring with a 21-yard field goal.

Two plays later, Sundberg pitched out wildly, and end Wade Praeuner recovered for the Reds at the White 11. Following a Mason scramble for nine yards, Craig swept in from the 2, and

CONTINUED ON 16



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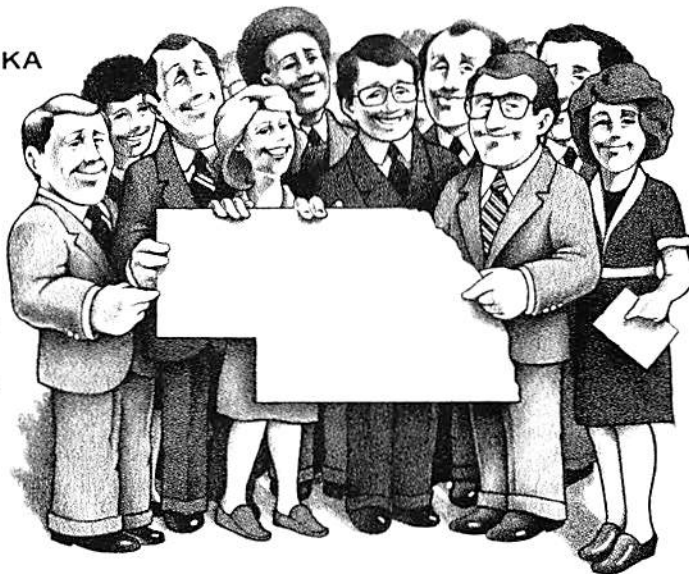


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Seibel made it 10-9 with nine minutes gone.

The Whites missed a field goal opportunity by Mark Hagerman early in the second quarter, but they capitalized moments later after end Dave Ridder returned an interception off fourth-team quarterback Todd Zart 17 yards to the Red 28.

Fans could be excused for wondering if former Husker mite Tim Wurth had sneaked back into uniform during the Whites' ensuing drive. Most of the work was done by 5-7 Bill Patterson, who had followed similarly-proportioned Wurth, from Omaha Burke.

"I grew up idolizing Tim Wurth. That's one of the main reasons I've tried to do what he did," Patterson, a walkon junior, said.

Patterson showed Wurth-style determination on a fourth-and-five sweep from the 13. He broke two tackles for six yards. Then he nudged the goal line from the 1. Osborne, calling plays for both sides in the press box, thought he was in. So did Patterson.

"I don't know how they spotted it. Some day...But I'm glad we scored," Patterson said.

Quarterback Troy Talarico, a Ralston soph, pushed it in on the next

play. "I'm glad Talarico got it. He took a lot of heat this spring," Patterson said.

The half ended at 10-6, Reds, after Lyday's 33-yard interception return gave Seibel a chance for a 43-yard field goal attempt into a stiff south wind on the final play. It was long enough, but wide.

Sundberg and his White mates made a game of it with their opening drive of the second half. Hagerman's 28-yard field goal made it 10-9.

"See that drive? Eighty yards. That's the only one of the spring against them (No. 1 defense)," said Line Coach Milt Tenopir, on the White staff.

Sundberg jumped sides and kept alive an 80-yard scoring drive with a fourth-down sneak over Rimington and veteran guard Mike Mandelko from the White 49.

On the next play, Sundberg hooked up with Brown for a 20-yard pass and finished it off with a 14-yard touchdown pass to Brown on the power play over Biggers.

The strength and determination displayed by the senior from Holdrege was testimony to the Nebraska development program.

When Brown arrived as a walkon, he weighed 158 pounds and could bench

press 200 pounds. "I was intimidated a little bit," he said. Heading into his final campaign, he is up to 178 and has tied John Noonan's team position record with a 280-pound bench press.

"My strength has improved tremendously, and so has my determination. The end zone is like a magnet. I distinctly remember I had five yards to go, and I knew I wouldn't get my hands on the ball again in that drive," Brown said.

The fourth offense put up the final score for the Reds in the fourth quarter after veteran tackle Toby Williams claimed a Talarico fumble at the White 31. Zart, a sophomore from Lincoln East, passed the final eight yards to classmate Dave Dietz, a walkon tight end from York.

The only one who was not surprised by developments on the ensuing kickoff was kicker Jan Harris. Clete Fischer, coaching the Reds, yelled, "Onside kick...onside kick."

Fischer was hollering at the receiving team's linemen, who had been dropping back quickly to set up a wedge. Fischer's ruse was designed to keep the Whites in place a count longer.

Harris thought he was being ordered to dribble the ball short, which he did beautifully, and teammate Rob Armstrong recovered.

## Spring Game By The Numbers

Red .....	10	0	7	7-24
White .....	0	6	3	0-9

Red — FG Seibel 21  
 Red — Craig 2 run (Seibel kick)  
 White — Talarico 1 run (kick failed)  
 White — FG Hagerman 28  
 Red — Brown 14 pass from Sundberg (Seibel kick)  
 Red — Dietz 8 pass from Zart (Campbell kick)

## Team Statistics

	Red	White
First Downs	20	13
Rushing	60-255	43-125
Passing	9-14-97-1	9-20-108-2
Total yards	352	233
Fumbles-lost	9-4	7-5
Penalties-yards	7-44	6-54
Interceptions-yards	2-33	1-17
Punts-average	2-29	4-36
Punt returns-yards	2-11	0-0
Kickoff returns-yards	1-16	2-44

## Red Individuals

### OFFENSE

**Rushing** — Mason, 13-77; Rozier, 9-30; Craig, 8-35; Wilkening, 2-9; Schellen, 2-8; Horne, 3-7; Divis, 3-5; Brungardt, 7-45; Sundberg, 4-9; Kingston, 4-18; Zart, 4-11.

**Passing** — Mason, 1-2-17; Zart, 4-7-28, 1 int.; Sundberg, 4-5-52.

**Receiving** — Kosmicki, 1-7; Brown, 3-51; Pokorny, 1-12; Lindstrom, 1-3; Dietz, 3-24.

**Punting** — Campbell, 2-29.

**Field goals** — Seibel, 1-2 (21).

**Punt returns** — Lyday, 1-9; Smith, 1-2.

**Kickoff returns** — Simmons, 1-16.

### DEFENSE

**Tackles-assists** — Felici, 1-2; Reinhardt, 3-0; McCormick, 1-3; Herrmann, 1-1; Tranmer, 2-3; Reynolds, 1-0; Strasburger, 2-0; Praeuner, 0-3; Weber, 0-2; Tucker, 1-0; T. Williams, 2-2; Bachman, 0-1; Damkroger, 2-5; Knox, 3-1; Baker, 1-2; Evans, 1-3; White, 0-3; Armstrong, 1-3; Juelfs, 0-1; Clark, 0-2; Murphy, 1-0; Lyday, 1-1; K. Peterson, 1-0; Napodando, 1-2; Clare, 0-1; McCallum, 1-1; Van Norman, 0-3; Lindstrom, 0-1.

**Fumbles recovered** — McCormick, Praeuner, T. Williams, Armstrong and Van Norman.

**Interceptions** — K. Peterson, 1-0; Lyday, 1-33.

## White Individuals

### OFFENSE

**Rushing** — Porter, 1-3; Miles, 2-4; Sundberg, 6-14; J. Smith, 7-22; Moravec, 2-9; Rathman, 4-17; Curtis, 2-14; Thompson, 1-5; Talarico, 8-1; Patterson, 5-10; Robinson, 2-7; Swanson, 2-17; Brungardt, 1-2.

**Passing** — Sundberg, 8-17-89, 1 int.; Talarico, 1-3-19, 1 int.

**Receiving** — Kimball, 2-36; J. Smith, 2-11; Schoettger, 1-20; Swanson, 2-24; Curtis, 1-6; Vergith, 1-11.

**Punting** — Wingard, 4-36.

**Field goals** — Hagerman, 1-2 (2).

**Kickoff returns** — Miles, 1-22; J. Smith, 1-22.

### DEFENSE

**Tackles-assists** — Hill, 0-2; Keeler, 5-3; Graeber, 2-4; Skow, 1-2; Waechter, 1-0; Zierke, 1-3; Newton, 2-3; Buchanan, 1-3; Ridder, 3-1; Reeves, 0-1; Proffitt, 1-4; Whiteman, 2-5; Debus, 0-4; Burch, 1-1; Daum, 2-4; Ripa, 3-3; Frain, 0-1; Dittmer, 0-1; Larson, 0-3; Haase, 1-1; G. Rozier, 0-1; Biggers, 0-1; McCashland, 0-2; Fisher, 0-2; T. Peterson, 1-0; Burke, 0-1; Haywood, 0-1; Holbrook, 0-2; Wade, 2-1; Ruhl, 0-1.

**Fumbles recovered** — Skow, Waechter, Buchanan, Reeves, Bourn and Fisher.

**Interceptions** — Ridder, 1-17.

When the Whites got the ball back, Tenopir called for "19 special reverse left," which is the intentional fumble play that guard Randy Schleusener made famous with his touchdown in the 1979 Cotton Bowl and which San Francisco soph Anthony Thomas made work for 20 yards last year.

"My heart was beating pretty fast in my stance," Thomas said. But the fumble bounced up between center Brad Mueling's legs. "I got my hands on it but not good enough to do any damage," Thomas rued.

Afterward, the quarterbacks drew most of the attention. Mason was elated. He had completed only one pass, a 17-yarder to Brown, in two attempts, but he showed his ankle again was sound.

Osborne said only three or four of Mason's 13 carries were designed runs. The rest were scrambles. "He ended up running more than we thought he would or wanted him to. He was reluctant to throw the ball," Osborne said.

"A couple of times, I should have thrown, but I took off. I would have thrown if I was healthy. But I might as well get used to getting hit. After a long layoff, I needed that," Mason said.

Sundberg said, "It was fun playing with the top guys, but I think we showed we (Whites) could move the ball. I'd like to think I can take it down the field if the ball is in my court."

Osborne said, "There were very few long runs, which was disappointing from the offensive standpoint."

The longest were 18 yards by White wingback Shane Swanson and 15 by Mason. All-Big Eight backs Craig and Mike Rozier managed only 35 yards on eight carries and 30 on nine, respectively. "They didn't get much running room," Osborne said.

Craig and Rozier did not appear in the same backfield, although Craig's spring experiment at fullback was designed to that end. Craig played little in the second half after jamming a thumb.

"My blocking's coming along," Craig said. "It's going to work. We're going to make it work. I know what it's about now."

"We were a little beat up at the skill-spots," Osborne said, accounting for the lack of sizzle on offense. "We could have played a little better if all our quarterbacks were healthy. We felt going into the spring that we had four



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*That's Mike Rozier following Mike Mandelko's block.*

quarterbacks who could play pretty good football."

Gill, after two operations on his leg, "is back to 80 to 85 percent, and we're really pleased with his improvement," Osborne said.

With Gill off limits to tacklers, the quarterback problems were compounded by senior Bruce Mathison's broken hand and a neck injury to soph Travis Turner. Both missed the game.

During the spring game, regular wingback Irving Fryar pulled a back muscle and played little. His backup, Tom Curry, didn't suit up because of a leg injury.

Starting tight end Jamie Williams sat out most of the afternoon with an injured foot, and alternate tight end Mitch Krenk was at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota having a cancerous toe removed.

The offense was further depleted when regular tackle Randy Theiss was excused with a strained knee and White tackle John Sherlock missed with a bad ankle.

The defenses were no better off.

"We were missing three of our top six linemen," Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride said. "Our whole second line was out." He referred to tackles Tom Gdowski (ankle) and Rob Stuckey and middle guard Jeff Merrell (knee). Mike Tranmer, a junior from Lyons, had moved ahead of holdover regular Merrell.

"In all fairness to the White team," McBride said, theoretically, the top offense was going against the third defense. You've got to figure that normally Mike Knox and Steve McWhirter would be the No. 2 linebackers.

Veteran McWhirter sat out all spring after knee surgery, and soph Knox played for the Reds. The White linebacking force was further thinned when Todd Spratte was forced to retire because of a series of injuries and Dan McCoy underwent knee surgery.

Omaha sophomore Dan Ripa, who was converted from fullback to linebacker during the spring, therefore, "was instrumental for the Whites. That's a pretty good changeover, and he made real good progress," McBride said.

Veteran linebacker Steve Damkroger led the Red tacklers with seven, while the White leaders were tackle Mike Keeler with eight and linebacker Kurt Whiteman, a transfer from the Air Force Academy, with seven.

"The Red defense played fairly well at times, but I was much more impressed with the linebacking and secondary aggressiveness than the front five," McBride said. "Both secondaries did some good things."

Although he was not jumping up and down with enthusiasm after reviewing the spring game films, Osborne called it a good show under the circumstances.

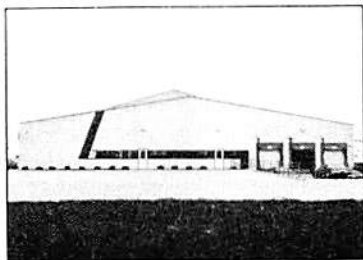
He was relieved that none of the injuries, except possibly McCoy's would carry over into fall, and the 72 degree, sunshiny afternoon for cavorting was especially welcome.

Five weeks earlier, he had opened spring drills in a rainstorm and a couple of late snows had hampered progress.

"That was the worst weather I can recall for spring practice, and I've been here 20 years. So I guess it wasn't all that bad," Osborne said. ●

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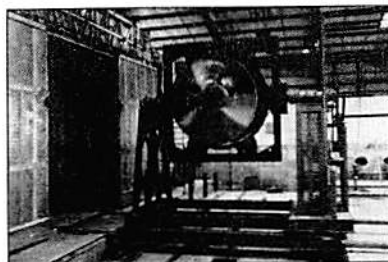
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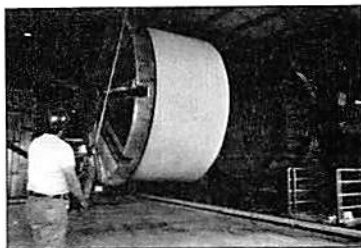
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# Big Eight Basketball Recruiting Balanced




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*Nebraska and Oklahoma close the gap with great recruiting hauls.  
But Kansas has the national experts talking dynasty.*

---

By Randy York

**I**t's not a fact of life, but it is a legitimate thought. Oklahoma and Nebraska, the schools with a hammerlock on Big Eight Conference football, appear to have recruited well enough to challenge for the same kind of supremacy in basketball.

Although Missouri, Kansas State and Kansas aren't likely to take such a thought lightly, their coaches have to respect the possibility — the Sooners and the Cornhuskers are no longer content to let football carry them through the winter months.

Last season, Oklahoma finished third in the Big Eight regular season, runner-up in the post-season tournament, then attracted national attention by advancing to the semifinals of the NIT. Nebraska was a step behind in fourth and stole national headlines by upsetting Missouri's No. 1-ranked Tigers in Columbia by 16 points.

Both the Sooners and the Huskers return the bulk of their firepower and recruited brilliantly to fill in the gaps for positional needs. There isn't even any

hedging. Both OU's Billy Tubbs and NU's Moe Iba are convinced they should be in the running for next year's conference championship.

"We feel like we've put together an excellent recruiting year," Tubbs said. "We signed the big men we need to build a good foundation for Oklahoma basketball in the future. I'm ready to tip things off now."

So's Iba. "We should have as good a chance to win the Big Eight as anybody," he said. "Overall, we had a good recruiting year. We got what we went after. It's up to them as far as helping us right away, but the ability is definitely there."

The Huskers' potential does not smack with as much national impact as Oklahoma because the Sooners signed Wayman Tisdale, named the Converse Player of the Year by the National High School Athletic Coaches Association.

Tisdale, 6-9 and 235, was also a *Parade Magazine* and McDonald's prep All-American. As a sophomore at Tulsa Washington, he averaged 14.5 points

and 12 rebounds a game. Those totals improved to 18.8 points and 14 rebounds as a junior. Last season, he averaged 23.7 points, 11.8 rebounds and three blocked shots a game. Tisdale's three-year reign of terror helped Washington win 71 of 83 games.

"We feel like Wayman is the best big player in the nation," Tubbs said after outrecruiting Tulsa for his services. "He has the potential to be the most dominating player in the country. He has a pro body with great speed and agility and he handles the ball well. He could give us a solid scoring attack in the paint and open things up for Chucky Barnett and David Little."

Nebraska is counting on similar productivity from Dave Hoppen, its 6-11 All-American prep recruit from Omaha Benson. Although Tisdale and Hoppen are the power bases for Oklahoma and Nebraska recruiting efforts, they are not the only names on the marquee.

The Sooners also recruited Aaron Combs, a 6-9 forward from National City, Calif., and Jerome Johnson, a 6-8

forward from Inglewood, Calif. Combs was a *Basketball Weekly* All-American and twice was selected to the All-California Interscholastic Federation team. He was also named to the All-San Diego county squad while leading Sweetwater High School to a 69-7 record in three years. During his career, he averaged 18.4 points and 15.1 rebounds a game. He shot 54 percent from the field last season.

"Aaron will come here as one of the better athletes on the team," Tubbs said. "He can run, jump and is very agile. He'll be tough around the basket."

Johnson will require more time to develop, having played only one year of organized basketball. He grew up in Louisiana, then moved to Inglewood during his junior year. His first experience with organized ball was the summer before his senior year, when he averaged 15.1 points and 10.8 rebounds on a 24-3 team. "He's considered the sleeper of all the high school recruits from California," Tubbs said. "He's the type who'll just get better and better."

Although Oklahoma signed only three high school recruits, the Sooners actually will have six new players on next year's team. Tisdale, Combs and Johnson will join William Tisdale (Wayman's older brother), Shawn Clark and Don Grandy. The elder Tisdale and Clark received hardship rulings because of physical problems last year. Grandy spent the season, clearing academic requirements after transferring from Amarillo (Texas) Junior College.

Joining Hoppen as Husker recruits are two more Nebraska preps — 6-6 forward Mike Martz of Beatrice and 6-7 James Moore of Omaha Burke — plus junior college transfers Stan Cloudy and David Ponce.

Cloudy, a 6-4 forward, was a first-team junior college All-American at Henderson County JC in Athens, Texas. He was the leading scorer and rebounder on a 33-3 team that finished third in the National Junior College Tournament in Hutchinson, Kan. Besides averaging 17.5 points and 8.6 rebounds a game, he shot 64.7 percent from the field.

Ponce, a 5-10 point guard from North Idaho Junior College in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, is the heir apparent to All-Big Eight guard Jack Moore. Nebraska outrecluted Idaho for his

talents. At North Idaho, the nation's 14th-ranked junior college team, Ponce averaged 12.9 points, 7.4 assists and 4.2 steals a game. He shot 53 percent from the field and 70 percent from the free throw line.

While Oklahoma and Nebraska earn the respect as comers in a rapidly developing basketball league, Kansas maintained its reputation as a mecca for nationally-prominent high school basketball stars. In a mid-May poll released by the *Knoxville* (Tenn.) *News-Sentinel*, KU was rated eighth in a national recruiting comparison.

After a 13-14 record and rare seventh-place finish in the Big Eight, the Jayhawks needed a transfusion, especially after graduating their top two players — Tony Guy and David Magley.

KU appears to have gotten that transfusion in the form of 6-10 Kerry Boagni of Serra High School in Gardena, Calif. A first-team *Parade Magazine* and McDonald's All-American, Boagni is listed as one of the 10 best prep players in the nation last season. He averaged 24.0 points and 15.6 rebounds in a sparkling three-year career.

The Jayhawks invaded Nebraska to sign Omaha Northwest's Ron Kellogg, a 6-5 forward who averaged 21.1 points and 10.2 rebounds a game. They also signed Calvin Thompson, a 6-6 forward from Kansas City, Kan., and Jeff Guiot, a 6-2 guard from Chanute, Kan.

Thompson was a first-team all-stater after leading Wyandotte High School to a 22-1 record and third-place finish in the state tournament. He averaged 21 points and 11 rebounds a game. KU Coach Ted Owens is considering moving Thompson from prep forward to college guard.

Guiot, also recruited by powerful Oregon State, was a first-team all-state guard at Chanute, where he averaged 24 points and nine assists a game. He's an all-around athlete, also having earned all-state 5A recognition at quarterback in football.

KU's recruiting took another gigantic step in May when 7-1 center Greg Dreiling announced that he would transfer from Wichita State. A year ago, Dreiling was one of the most heralded prep basketball players in the country at Kaupan-Mt. Carmel High School in Wichita. As a freshman, he played in all 29 Wichita State games, averaging 8.1 points, 4.2 rebounds and 18 minutes of

playing time a game. Under NCAA rules, Dreiling will sit out next season before becoming eligible to play.

While Dreiling waits, the Jayhawks will have available Carl Henry, a 6-6 forward who averaged 19 points and 11.7 rebounds at Oklahoma City University two years ago. "We'll be very young, but we'll have some physical qualities not on our last team," Owens said.

Like Kansas, K-State faced a monumental recruiting task. The Wildcats must replace their entire starting lineup with the exception of 6-10 center Les Craft.

Jack Hartman tried to ease that burden by recruiting heavily in the St. Louis area. He signed four prospects on the Missouri side of St. Louis — 6-8 forward Alex Williams of O'Fallen Tech, 6-2 guard Jonas Cody of Vashon, 6-8 forward Ben Mitchell from Christian Brothers and 6-4 guard Jim Roder of DeSmet.

Williams was a Missouri all-stater, who averaged 19 points and 17 rebounds a game. He shot 55 percent from the field and 77 percent from the line. Missouri was K-State's No. 1 competition in his recruitment.

Cody was also a Missouri all-stater and tabbed one of the top 100 prep players in *Street and Smith* magazine. He averaged 24 points and 10 rebounds a game and shot 58 percent from the field and 90 percent from the line.

One high school publication lists Mitchell as one of the top 50 prep prospects in the nation after he averaged 22 points and 16 rebounds a game. A straight-A student, who is considered a strong leaper and accurate shooter, Mitchell selected K-State over Missouri, Kansas and Purdue.

Roder was named the St. Louis Metro Player of the Year after leading DeSmet to a 27-5 record and the 1982 Missouri 4A state championship. In addition to averaging 19.2 points and shooting 56 percent from the field, he finished as DeSmet's all-time career assist leader with 320. An outstanding baseball player, he chose K-State over Missouri, Nebraska and Wyoming.

The Wildcats recruited another St. Louis Metro Player of the Year in Tyrone Jackson, a 6-6 guard-forward from Lincoln High School in East St. Louis, Ill. Jackson led Lincoln to a state championship and 29-1 record, averaging 17 points and 14 rebounds a game. He also averaged more than five block-



ed shots a game. Besides K-State, he was recruited by Missouri, Kansas, Minnesota and Illinois.

K-State's sixth recruit is Fred Marshall, a 5-9 all-city and all-state guard from Marshall High School in Chicago. Marshall led his team to a 24-6 record and fourth-place finish in the Illinois state tournament, averaging 19 points and six assists a game. He shot 57 percent from the field and 70 percent from the line.

While K-State surprised and hurt Missouri's recruiting efforts in St. Louis, Norm Stewart produced an interesting quartet of recruits to try to fill the voids left by All-American Ricky Frazier and fellow starter Marvin "Moon" McCrary. Stewart signed 6-1 guard Billy Roundtree, 7-0 center Lance Scott, 6-8 forward James Douglas and 6-6 forward-guard Dwight Moody.

Roundtree broke the Missouri state high school scoring record with a 37.7 point average at Middletown High School in Wellsville, Mo. The former record was held by Bill Bradley, who went on to be an All-American at Princeton and play for the New York Knicks.

Although Roundtree scored 3,243 career points, his prowess went largely unnoticed because he played for a Class A school in a part of Missouri with little media exposure. Stewart, though, is impressed with Roundtree's 35-inch vertical jump and figures he'll help the Tigers get the ball upcourt quicker.

If Roundtree isn't a unique enough recruit, Stewart uncovered one in Scott, a 7-foot, 220-pound center from Bismarck, Ark. Mizzou's coach considers Scott, who lived in Saudi Arabia as a freshman, a diamond in the rough. He did not even start his sophomore year, but grew from 6-5 to 6-10 between his sophomore and junior years. Last season, he averaged 22 points and 15 rebounds a game while shooting 58 percent from the field and 78 percent from the free throw line. Doctors predict that Scott will continue to grow until he's approximately 7-2.

Douglas, a 220-pounder from East St. Louis, Ill., is a Missouri transfer from Butler Community College in El Dorado, Kan. He averaged 15 points and eight rebounds a game for a balanced team that won 22 games. Stewart, who considers Douglas one of the top five juco players in the nation, outrecruited Hartman in this case. Douglas has a good shooting touch

from up to 17 feet.

Moody, a native of Memphis, is another Tiger juco transfer, from Belleville Area College in Belleville, Ill. Stewart does not discourage comparisons between him and Frazier, the graduating senior who leaves gaps of 22 points and seven rebounds a game. Even though he's 6-6 and a great leaper, Moody is a good ball handler and played some point guard in junior college. He will be a sophomore. Douglas will be a junior.

Among Oklahoma State's five recruits is Mitch Jones, a 6-3 Oklahoma all-state guard who averaged 29 points a game at Choctaw. Jones, the state's leading Class 3A scorer, may be able to make the biggest contribution the quickest for OSU Coach Paul Hansen.

Hansen signed two other Oklahoma all-stars — 6-7 forward Ronnie Brown who averaged 17 points a game for Midwest City, and David Taylor, a 6-7 forward who averaged 15 points a game for Ada.

The Cowboys went to Borger, Texas, to sign Scott Hunt, a 6-0 guard who averaged 18 points and seven rebounds en route to Texas all-state honors and honorable mention All-American recognition in *Basketball Weekly*. Hunt is a 3.9 student on a 4.0 scale.

Oklahoma State also signed a junior college transfer in Anthony Epps, a 6-8 forward who averaged 22 points and 12 rebounds a game at Eastern Oklahoma JC. Epps was an all-stater at Provine High School in Jackson, Miss., before spending two years at Eastern Oklahoma.

Iowa State Coach Johnny Orr believes he produced an excellent high school recruiting crop with letters of intent from 6-4 guard Ted Burbach, 7-0 center Brad Dudek, 6-4 guard Ron Virgil, 6-8 forward David Moss and 6-7 forward Sam Hill.

"We're very excited and pleased with our recruiting year," Orr said. "Our goals were to fill our basic needs with talent, and we've done that. We've recruited a talented big man, some inside forward help and a couple of dependable guards. We recruited more scoring punch than last year and every one of these players is capable of giving us immediate help."

Dudek, from Duluth, Minn., averaged 21 points, 10 rebounds and 4.5 blocked shots a game. He led Duluth East High School to three straight 23-2 seasons.

Burbach was considered by many to be the premier player in Iowa. After averaging 18 points, nine rebounds and seven assists a game for Dubuque Wahlert, he shared the "Mr. Basketball" title bestowed by the Iowa Daily Press Association. He led his team to the Iowa 3A state championship as both a sophomore and a junior.

Virgil, Moss and Hill are all recruits from Chicago. Virgil averaged 24 points, 9.5 rebounds, 6 steals and 3.5 assists for Providence St. Mel High. Named one of the top 20 players in the Chicago area, he played in the McDonald's All-Star Classic.

Moss, named all-area in both *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, averaged 24.5 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots for Leyden High School. Hill, named to the Chicago's first All-Public League team and an all-stater in both major metro newspapers, averaged 20 points, 14 rebounds and five blocked shots for Amundson High.

Colorado Coach Tom Apke recruited three big players, he said, "to minimize our most obvious weakness last year." The trio includes 6-9 center Randy Downs from LaPuenta, Calif., 6-8 forward Ron Roberts from West New York, N.Y., and 6-8½ forward Don Yowell from Arvada, Colo.

Downs was an All-California Interscholastic Federation selection, averaging 29 points and 12.7 rebounds at Nagales High School. "He shoots well from the outside," Apke said. "Not only his size, but his skills fit into our style."

Roberts is a sleeper, having played basketball for only eight months after moving to New Jersey from Trinidad. He averaged 15 points and 12 rebounds for Memorial High School. "We think he's a diamond in the rough," Apke said. "His potential is unlimited."

Yowell was a first-team Colorado all-state selection after averaging 20 points and 15.2 rebounds a game. Apke also signed two prep guards, 6-2 Jeff Hughes of Fountain Valley, Calif., and 6-1 Mike Reid of Rock Island, Ill. Hughes is the son of former Nebraska assistant Coach Rex Hughes and Reid is the son of former Kansas assistant Coach Duncan Reid.

Also joining Apke at Colorado are two players he recruited at Creighton — 6-7 forward Alex Stivrins and 6-4 guard Tony Pruitt. Both will be ineligible next season to accommodate their transfers.●



# SHEPLERS

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# Turner Hasn't Been Alone On Long Comeback Trail

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*Support and encouragement have come through letters from others who have shared the frustrating experience, from a father who has battled greater odds and ex-Husker Bill Barnett, who is going through a similar rehabilitation.*

---

By Mike Babcock

**T**here were letters, Turner Gill said. Lots of letters. Letters bearing postmarks from all over the United States. Letters written by hand and typewritten letters. The writers weren't asking for autographs or favors; the letters weren't the kind you'd expect the best quarterback in the Big Eight Conference to get. They were letters of encouragement, letters from people describing similar injuries, ones from which they had recovered.

There was hope. It came through the U.S. mail for the price of a postage stamp. Every day it came, and Turner Gill kept working and believing. He never gave up.

He couldn't, really, not with all the letters, the constant reminders that he was not alone.

The injury he suffered at some point during the first quarter of the Iowa State game, the one which sidelined him for both Oklahoma and the Orange Bowl, was unusual. Doctors called it a "freak injury." It was certainly uncommon, maybe one in several thousand, but there were other people who had been forced to deal with such nerve damage, and they made themselves known in the letters.

"It was encouraging to know it (his leg) could come back," said Gill. After a difficult period in which uncertainty was the only certainty, he knew it would. Doubt gave way to impatience.

It became a matter of "when," not "whether."

The worst time "was maybe the first month of it, when the doctors seemed unsure about things, and even they couldn't come out and tell me what to expect," Gill said.

No one expected Gill to suit up for Nebraska's annual Red-White intrasquad football game in Memorial Stadium, just over five months after he suffered the injury which caused severe nerve damage in his right leg; that was for certain.

Gill, himself, didn't know he'd pull on a Red team uniform until the Friday afternoon before the game-type scrimmage which capped four weeks of spring drills. Head coach Tom Osborne told him he could suit up. "If it had been up to me, I probably wouldn't have," said Gill, who held for placekicks.

"I didn't really want to go out there if I wasn't going to play, but I decided, 'Oh well, I guess I'd rather be with my teammates on the sideline than up in the pressbox.'"

Perhaps an even bigger surprise, however, came four weeks earlier when Gill was cleared for spring practice. Osborne talked to doctors just before spring break, and "they told him to let me go out and see what I could do. They said I could probably practice but that I'd just have to go out and see for myself," Gill said. "I wanted to be out there, even in shorts just throwing the ball. I wanted to be part of the team."

With that okay, Gill was allowed to practice, even though he was held out of scrimmages and all contact work to minimize the risk of his suffering other injuries which might result from limited mobility during his ongoing rehabilitation.

The thought of being hit hard didn't bother him. "We knew I'd get hit; the doctors wouldn't have let me go out there if there had been any danger. I wasn't worried about that particular injury anymore," he said.

Gill was allowed to practice with the admonition that he should stop when he got tired. During four weeks of practice, he took two days off. By then, it was apparent the people who had written the letters were right.

Turner Gill sat in the varsity locker-room at the south end of Memorial Stadium and pulled on his sweat socks in preparation for an early May workout with teammate Neil Harris, a sophomore defensive back. Gill had just returned from a quick visit to his home in Fort Worth, Texas. Time was short. The spring semester final exams were over and a summer mini-session would begin in a week.

"I'm not a patient-type person," Gill said, explaining his problem in recovering from two surgeries to repair the nerve damage in his right leg. "I get frustrated when I can't do something right away."

At first, it looked like Gill might resume playing football, if not right away, at least by the Orange Bowl game

against top-ranked Clemson on New Year's night. The day after he was kicked in the leg, during a 31-7 Nebraska victory over Iowa State, Gill underwent what was termed "minor surgery" to drain blood from the badly-swollen calf area of his right leg. The surgery alleviated pressure on a nerve so the muscle could expand normally.

Dr. Pat Clare, the Cornhusker team physician who joined Lincoln vascular surgeon Dr. Paul Collicott in performing the 25-minute surgery, said recovery might take anywhere from "a few weeks to three or four months." The Orange Bowl was still a possibility...

Each night Gill would go to sleep, expecting to wake up in the morning and find his leg as good as new.

That hope quickly faded, and just over a month later, after a visit to the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans where he was examined by Dr. David Kline, a neuro-surgeon and one of the country's foremost experts in the treatment of Gill's type of injury, Gill underwent a second, exploratory surgery.

It lasted approximately 90 minutes and was performed by Clare, fellow NU team physician Dr. Charles Newman, and Dr. Eric Pierson, a Lincoln neurosurgeon.

Kline said Gill's injury, a form of "drop foot," could end a football player's career if the nerve were to be stretched. But if there was blockage, as it appeared in his case, rather than stretching, such an injury was treatable. The nerve would regenerate...in time. One estimate was six to nine months.

The Orange Bowl had long since been ruled out. At that time, "I didn't expect to be able to go through spring practice," said Gill.

He did, however, become optimistic about his chances of playing football again. Kline was the first doctor able to give him something definite and end the uncertainty which had bothered him so in the days following the first surgery. Kline "laid it out flat," Gill said. "He told me, 'This is what's wrong, and it's going to be a matter of time before it heals.'"

For one so impatient, the news was both good and bad.

The letters helped.

Strangers wrote the letters which provided Gill with encouragement and the realization that others have recovered from similar injuries. But at least two other, more familiar people provided



*Barrett waits his turn while Gill works out on Cybex rehabilitation machine.*

direction for his rehabilitation. One, far and away the most significant, was his father, Turner Gill, Sr. The other was former Cornhusker Bill Barnett, now a defensive end for the National Football League Miami Dolphins.

Eleven years ago, Gill's father fell off a building, suffering a broken back and serious head injuries. Turner Gill Sr. spent the next two years bed-ridden, either at home or in a hospital, paralyzed from the waist down. He's still disabled and unable to work. Turner Gill Sr. still suffers seizures; his left hand is numb, but he has never lost his faith.

"I'm a tough cookie," he said, two days after his son's second surgery. "I try not to let anything get me down. I hope and pray that my son has developed his own inner strength."

If you were to ask Lincoln attorney William F. (Bill) Wright, Turner Gill Sr. need not have worried about his son's resolve. Wright and his wife, Susie, are Turner's "adopted Lincoln parents" in Nebraska's successful program for out-of-town athletes. Wright observed Gill's handling of the injury, first hand.

Gill was at Wright's house the evening of the Iowa State game. It was there he became uncomfortable to the point that Bill Wright called Dr. Clare. A tingling sensation in his toes indicated to Clare that there was pressure on the nerve.

"No way could I have reacted like he has at age 19," said Wright. "I'd be depressed or bitter or something. Not Turner. He's as composed off the field as he is on it."

Turner has a "tremendous amount of inner strength. There is a reservoir he seems to draw upon when things don't go quite the way he would like them. He doesn't wear religion on his sleeve, but that inner strength has to come from his family background and his strong Baptist background," Wright said.

"I think I'll be a better person for all of this," Gill said. Nearly six months after the injury, he had a solid basis from which to make such a statement.

"I'm not paralyzed or anything, but I know how it feels. I know how people who are paralyzed feel, and I'm going to talk with them and try to help in whatever way and whenever I can," he said.

Bill Barnett understands what Gill has gone through, physically, perhaps better than anyone else because he went through a similar experience. During a nationally-televised game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, in the second game last season, Barnett was kicked in the right calf.

He thought he had pulled a muscle.

"I was hurting, but we already had a lot of injuries, so I kept playing. I

*CONTINUED ON 59*





If you have questions or comments, you may write the  
**BIG RED MAILBAG**  
 Box 83222  
 Lincoln, NE 68501

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I am a Nebraska transplant now living in Minnesota. I was born and raised around the Cozad-Lexington area (home of Mick Tingelhoff and Monte Kiffin). I have always followed the Big Red. Since my move, I started subscribing to *Huskers Illustrated*, and I feel right at home.

Your articles are excellent, and the photos are superb. Keep up the good work.

Every Saturday during the football season, rain, snow or shine, I listen to the game on my car radio. My wife and neighbors think I'm crazy, but it's worth every minute to me. I am very proud to be a Cornhusker.

I look forward to Sept. 17, 1983 when Nebraska comes to play at Minnesota. I will be there.

John McCarthy,  
 Cottage Grove, Minn.



Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I truly enjoy your coverage of Nebraska football; it's almost like being there. The problem is, I've never been there. I was wondering how I might acquire tickets to next year's games, home or away. I would kill for tickets.

Loren Wagner,  
 Culbertson, Neb.

•According to Ticket Manager Helen Ruth Wagner, orders are accepted from Jan. 1 to June 15. All requests are dated June 15 to provide equal opportunities for the few available. Demand always far exceeds supply. Orders are filled on a priority basis, top priorities going to clubs supporting the Athletic Department, and alumni. Orders should be sent to Athletic Ticket Office, P.O. Box 82848, Lincoln, Neb. 68501 — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Please find enclosed my check to cover my renewal subscription and also for my brother, Harold Figler of Red Oak, Iowa. Will you be sending out the folders (weekly updates) prior to each football game as you did last year?

Out here in Phoenix, I wouldn't receive that until Tuesday after the game on Saturday. I have been told that for some additional price you could mail the pamphlet first class and I would receive it before the game, which would make it more interesting.

Clyde M. Figler,  
 Phoenix, Ariz.

•Subscribers will, indeed, receive the updates before each game this fall. For those who have experienced slow mail service, we will send them first class for an additional \$7 on request — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Somehow I find it hard to believe that these letters are representative. Of course they are not. They are selected as a part of p.r. strategy to convince others that you have a great magazine. I, for one, have been very disappointed. I probably expected too much.

I feel like it is the work of some outsiders who gather a minimum of information, then present it for a bunch of lamebrained Nebraska fanatics who don't need substance as long as there is plenty of Big Red rah-rah. Aren't we great? Isn't our magazine great, ad nosium (sic)?

Ray Mellor,  
 Aurora, Ore.

•Ray also complained about slow mail service (see previous comment) and lack of up-to-date information. A magazine obviously cannot compete with daily newspapers for timeliness; we try to compensate with greater detail. We make no apology for our rah-rah enthusiasm for Nebraska athletics or *Huskers Illustrated* — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Your March-April issue was another great inspiration to me, particularly the recruiting review feature. From reading about each of the new recruits, with their accompanying pictures and the enthusiasm of the entire coaching staff, it appears there is nothing but the best for all Nebraskans in 1982.

Ralph E. Allely,  
 Grand Island, Neb.

•Sorry, Ralph, but we will be unable to use your enclosed jingles, although they were read and enjoyed here — ED.



Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I have enjoyed your flashbacks about Johnny Rodgers and his accomplishments on the gridiron. He was a great player for a great university.

There is another great who played in the 1950s by the name of Bobby Reynolds. I saw him play in one game at Boulder, Colo., in 1950. It seems every game he played in that he scored at least three TDs. Would it be possible to do a feature on this fellow and list some of his records?

John N. Hay,  
Sweet Home, Ore.

•Reynolds set the national scoring record of 157 points (22 TDs, 25 PATs) as a sophomore halfback in 1950. Former greats are regularly featured in our Tradition section. Bobby's feats will certainly be reviewed in a future issue — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

My 16-year-old son is an avid Nebraska fan and would like to know if the university plans to conduct a football camp this summer. Any information you could send would be much appreciated.

James Frates  
Kenhi, Alaska

•A Big Red Football School brochure has been forwarded. The Cornhusker coaching staff will conduct school sessions for boys who will be in grades 9 through 12 this fall June 2-5, June 6-9 and June 9-12. The fee is \$100. Advance registration deposit of \$50 is required. Applications should be sent to Big Red Football School, 217 South Stadium, Lincoln, Neb. 68588 — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I suggest a new logo or emblem on the helmets of Nebraska's football team. If you feel the block "N" is the thing, okay, but if you think it is possible to get something more exciting and innovative, I would suggest the emblem that is in the middle of the floor at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Look at it and tell me it doesn't have more personality than "N".

Check Miami's logo and tell me it does not cause more conversation and take more notice than the old letters. This logo would do the same for us.

Harry Nekonchuk,  
Omaha, Neb.

•Don Bryant, NU's assistant athletic director and sports information director,



tells us: "The football staff has considered a number of helmet logos through the years. In view of the success Nebraska teams have had during the last 20 years while having the traditional block "N" — the official "Iron N" logo of the "N" Club — Coach Osborne and his staff have not chosen to change the logo at this time." — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Last year I attended my first Nebraska game (Florida State) in Lincoln, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I am originally from North Platte and moved to Colorado. Colorado is OK, but I'm glad that I am a Cornhusker.

I noticed in your sweepstakes coupon that you are giving away Nebraska jerseys. Ever since I was at the game last fall I wanted to buy a jersey. Since I live in Colorado, I don't have much chance to get to Lincoln.

I would appreciate it if you would give

me information on who to contact about ordering Nebraska jerseys.

I love your magazine and wish a new issue came out every week.

Bill Sherman,  
Sterling, Colo.

•The jerseys given away in the sweepstakes were ordered especially for that purpose and regretfully are not available to the public — ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Am enclosing a return envelope and asking you if you could send me Turner Gill's address and thanks very much.

I enjoy **Huskies Illustrated** very much but wouldn't be interested in a lifetime subscription as I will be 84 years old in May. I have gone to the games both home and away for the last 18 years, but have decided not to go to anymore. But I still love them and am very much interested in them.

Alice Matthews,  
O'Neill, Neb.

•All inquiries concerning the coaches and athletes should be directed to Sports Information, 116 Memorial Stadium, University of Nebraska, Lincoln 68588

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I have long been a Husker fan and even made a couple of scrapbooks for Biff Jones during the 1939 and 1940 seasons. I have an autographed football from the Rose Bowl team...also the first Orange Bowl team. Both are treasured possessions even though the Huskers were defeated. Oz Black and John Bentley used to furnish us with great material during the football seasons. Now that I am taking **Huskies Illustrated** I will again be well versed on the powers and thrills of Husker sports and look forward to more medallions.

Hope E. Lomax  
Las Vegas, Nev.





# He's No Tiger On Paper But Just Blow The Whistle

*Steve Damkroger had Husker blood in his veins, the inner drive and intimidating demeanor to become the dominant force on the Big Eight's dominant defense.*

By Tom Ash

**B**efore the 1976 Oklahoma game, the Nebraska football team received a telegram from former mate, Tony Davis, the firebrand fullback who had moved on to the Cincinnati Bengals that year.

It read: "Football is a nasty game played by nasty boys. Kick their \_\_\_\_\_."

Now that was Steve Damkroger's kind of telegram.

Proving once again that football is an inexact science, Damkroger is, in the lexicon of the trade, a "player," when it shows right there on paper that he isn't.

Boyd Epley, the Cornhuskers' strength coach and a key figure in the conditioning and development program, has devised a sophisticated system for measuring athletic ability. Huskers are rated according to the Athletic Index after a series of seven tests to determine strength, explosiveness, agility, speed and endurance.

Of the 17 linebackers who completed the winter conditioning course, Damkroger was dead last. It should be pointed out that Damkroger missed four weeks of winter conditioning after an appendix operation. It also should be noted that his marks weren't significantly better when he had all of his parts.

Running his finger across the Damkroger line on a computer printout, Epley said, "He has no explosiveness, average strength and below-average speed."

Most telling was his time for 40 yards — 5.13 seconds. It was slowest among the linebackers. The average for defen-

sive tackles was 5.03.

It wasn't that Damkroger wasn't trying. Pro scouts were on hand with their stopwatches. "That day bothered me. I'd like to play pro ball. I may never get another chance," he said.

Damkroger's 305 pounds in the bench press was No. 7 among the linebackers. He lifted the same weight at the start of the program.

So how come Damkroger will start at linebacker this fall for a third straight year? "Usually you have to be about 28 to start around here," Linebacker Coach John Melton said, exaggerating

slightly.

Why will Damkroger letter four years? How did he lead the Big Eight's dominant defense with 116 tackles as a junior, and why is he the No. 10 tackler in Husker history with a year to play?

"The things the Athletic Index don't measure are dedication, perseverance and what the coaches call 'heart,'" Epley said.

Damkroger is no paper tiger. He is an enigma. "He's a throwback to the old school," Melton said. "He doesn't do anything until they snap the ball. He's a great linebacker."

He also has great Husker bloodlines. His father, Ralph, started at end for Nebraska (1947-49), and brother Maury was a throwback-style fullback in 1972-73 before playing two years at linebacker for the New England Patriots. His sister, Carol, married former Husker gridder Reg Gast.

Maury, now a marketing representative for the First National Bank in Omaha, said, "stopwatches and weights are just a part of football. I played in the pros with guys like Steve; they couldn't run fast, and they looked terrible. But they were always on the pile. When you run in a football game, you have to walk through three guys."

"A lot of guys carry their pads better than others. A lot of 4.3 guys really slow down in pads. Steve's not one of those."

Said Steve: "It would be nice to be the perfect athlete. It would be nice to run 4.7, but I can't. They say you have to be so fast and strong and jump so high to play for Nebraska, but I know it's not true. I say let 'em play ball."

Damkroger admits he is not much for all the testing and regimentation. "I spend a lot more time lifting when I



don't have to," he said.

Epley, however, said Damkroger "is one of the few athletes we have who does everything perfectly, to the letter. If he wasn't one of the most dedicated athletes we have, he wouldn't be out there. He has to work at it."

Melton said Damkroger's 40 times are misleading. "When he's in tip-top shape, he's a 4.8. I can show you film where he runs down (split end Tom) Vergith. He can run as fast as he has to. And he practices just the way he plays."

Maury remembers "shooting a few baskets" with his younger brother in the driveway of their northeast Lincoln home, "and you could tell he was going to be a decent athlete. He was pretty big and he was a tough kid, a fighter."

Steve was exposed to Nebraska football at an early age. When he was 10, a friendly gatekeeper would turn the other way when he and his buddies would sneak into Memorial Stadium. Later, his parents took him, and he was in Norman that memorable day in 1971 when Nebraska edged Oklahoma in the Game of the Century when Maury was a sophomore.

"I was never pushed into sports. It was just what everybody else was doing. I wanted to more than had to," he said.

He played four years in the midgits for the Lincoln Firefighters as a fullback and linebacker. At first, "those guys were a couple of years older, and I got beat up pretty good. But not enough to discourage me," he said.

His heroes were linebackers — Dick Butkus of the Bears and Chris Hanburger of the Redskins. "I probably fantasized. I didn't think I'd ever be that good," he said.

But he did a good imitation of his idols' ferocious style.

Bob Els, Damkroger's coach at Lincoln Northeast High, said he was "kind of intimidating with his demeanor on the field. He'd do anything you asked of him and do it hard. He has pretty good emotion, but he doesn't show it. He has that internal drive that makes him a great player. He's a competitor."

At Northeast, Damkroger was a running back in a veer offense and "a good straightahead runner," Els said. "But we could see early where his forte was." He was "the best ballplayer I've ever

had" at linebacker, and he made the *Parade Magazine* All-American team.

But he was largely ignored by major college recruiters, probably because it was a foregone conclusion that he would accept a Nebraska scholarship.

Northern Colorado and Iowa State showed some interest, and he got a letter from Georgia Tech, "but I threw it away. It was too far from home. I would have come here anyway, but I wanted to take all the trips I could," he said.

He hit the weights, added 20 pounds and checked in as a Husker at 225 pounds. He took advantage of the one-year rule and redshirted as a freshman.

Always, he has been self-deprecating, letting his performance and others do the tooting for him.

He played mostly on the special teams as a freshman "so the good guys didn't have to get hurt on kickoffs."

Damkroger doesn't cover kicks anymore. Is he one of the good guys now? "Coach Melton thinks I can't run that far," he said.

He played high school and Junior Legion baseball for Judds Brothers, "but I wasn't real consistent at the plate. I enjoyed it even though I was terrible."

He played basketball until his senior year, "but I was lucky if I scored four points a game."

He ran the hurdles as a sophomore, "but I was faster then. I had to be."

By the fifth game of his sophomore year at Nebraska, he was in the starting lineup. The Oklahoma game was acknowledged as his best. He logged nine unassisted tackles and had nine assists.

"I thought it was my best game until I saw the films before the Oklahoma game last year. We were pathetic (in a 21-17 loss). I thought I was terrible," he said.

Damkroger keeps a lid on his emotions and says little. "I don't get myself in trouble. The less you say, the less you have to take back," he said.

He also does a good job of masking pain. "He doesn't get hurt very often, and if he's hurt, he just says to slap some tape on it and send him back out," Trainer Jerry Weber said.

Maury Damkroger remembers getting called to the hospital when Steve was in midget football. "His coach said he just walked out of the pile and said, 'I think my arm's broken,'" he said.

It was.

"Our mom was working, and it was a couple of hours before the doctor got there. It had to hurt, but he never said a thing," Maury said.

Last January, Steve underwent an emergency appendectomy at 2:30 p.m. on a Wednesday. Melton said, "I went up there at noon the next day, and he was sitting on the edge of the bed eating his lunch. He said he wanted out of there. He checked out at 5:30 that night. Is that normal?"

Damkroger has been involved in some memorable collisions in his three years as a Husker, but the most vivid for those who were there came in the third quarter of last year's 37-14 triumph at Oklahoma.

Damkroger violently stopped Sooner fullback Stanley Wilson in his tracks on a screen pass. Wilson went out with cracked ribs. Damkroger went to the bench for a series to let his head clear.

Husker cornerback Ric Lindquist was riding on Wilson's back when Damkroger hit. The blow knocked the wind out of Lindquist, who said he had never been hit so hard, even though Wilson took the brunt of the impact.

"I don't know if it hurt him (Wilson), but it hurt me," Damkroger recalled. "I pinched a nerve. I had to move my fingers to see if I was paralyzed. I thought my neck was broken."

True to form, Damkroger remembers the worst of times.

In the Orange Bowl loss to Clemson last season, the Tigers were running the clock in the final minutes, and Nebraska was fighting desperately to get the ball back.

On third-and-four, Clemson quarterback Homer Jordan swept right. Damkroger hit him short of the first down. "I hit him as hard as I could, and he just kept running," he said. Jordan gained 23 yards, and the Huskers didn't get another chance on offense until the last six seconds.

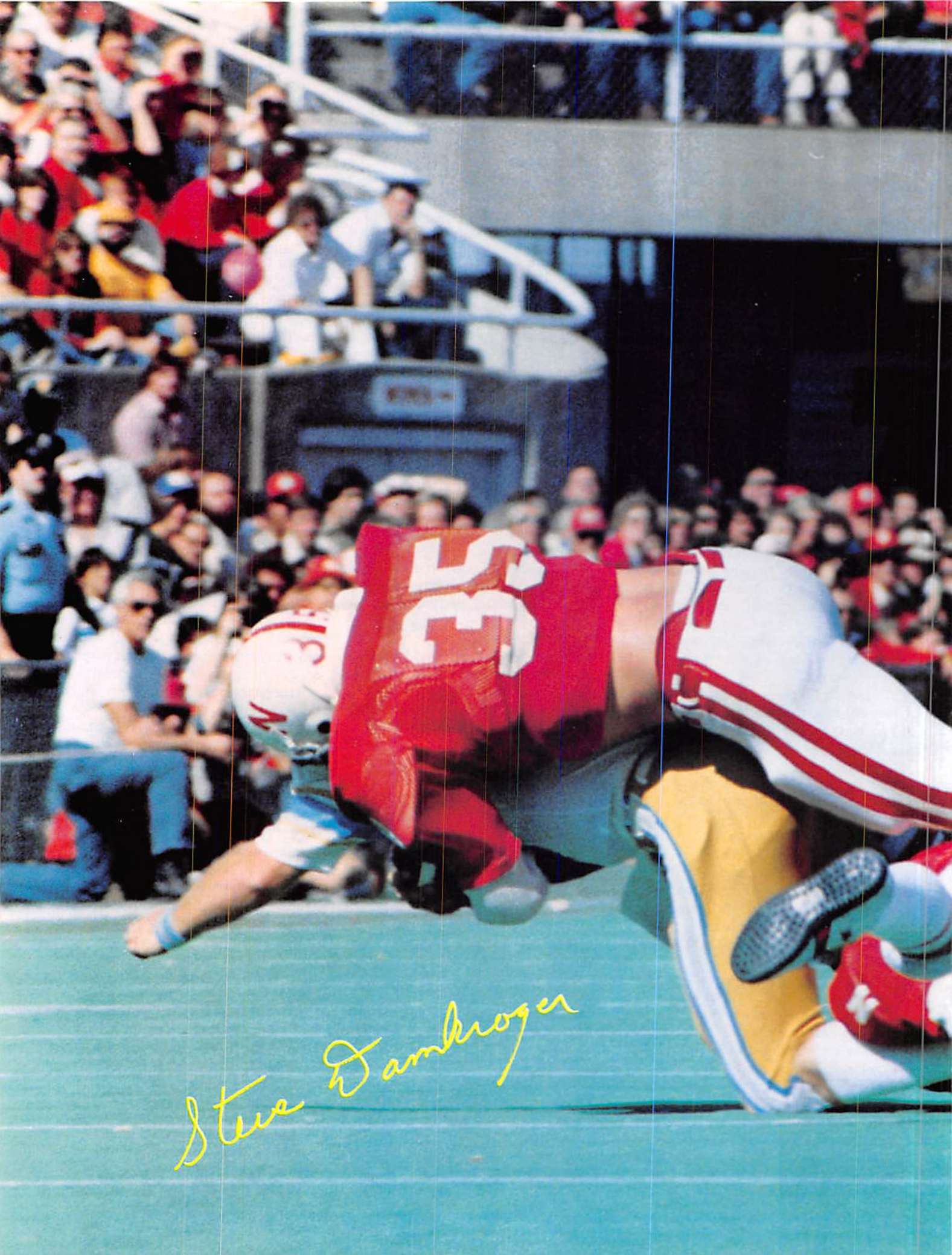
"We played better teams than Clemson. We were terrible," Damkroger said.

His career so far has "worked out as well as I could have expected," Damkroger said. "I think I played better last year. I don't make the mistakes I made when I was younger."

Heading into his final campaign, Damkroger volunteered for extra duty in Epley's summer conditioning program. "I want to have a better year than I did last year," he said.

On the field and on paper. ●





Steve Dambroger







# Add Three More Chapters To Walkon Success Story



Phil Bates



Henry Waechter

*Jimmy Williams, Rodney Lewis and Phil Bates paid their own way, paid their dues and found their final reward in the pro draft.*

By Randy York

**F**orget about Jimmy Williams for a moment. Sure, the Detroit Lions' first-round draft choice was a walk-on at Nebraska. But he wasn't the longest shot to come in for the Cornhuskers on the first day of the National Football League Draft.

That honor goes to another walk-on, Rodney Lewis. Five years ago, his chances were worse than winning \$25,000 in back-to-back games of Keno in a crooked casino. He walked on Nebraska's campus without a scholarship and is walking off a third-round draft choice of the New Orleans Saints.

Lewis, a 5-11, 190-pound corner-back, has the speed to run with the fleetest of running backs and the disposition to grind them up and sprinkle them on his breakfast cereal.

He learned his "fear strikes out" theory of football on the sandlots of Minneapolis. "We didn't wear pads or helmets in our pickup games, but we didn't play touch. It was the real McCoy," Lewis said. "If you got hurt, the other team called you a sissy. And if you couldn't play that'd mess up the teams. Then somebody else would have to drop out to even up the sides."

Drop out is a foreign language to Lewis. In every challenge, it's Rodney and his chinstrap against the world. Sometimes, the resulting collision leaves both the ball carrier and the tackler wondering what day it is, or how many fingers the doctor is holding up.

Ask Andy Gibler, Missouri's three-year tight-end starter. Once, just as the ball reached Gibler's fingertips, Lewis flew into him like Christopher Reeve in a scene straight out of *Superman II*. Lewis knocked himself silly, but at least he heard the count. Gibler, 6-5 and 235, saw nothing but stars.

"Rodney loves to play the game of football. There's no kind of scared bones in his body," says Sammy Sims, Nebraska's two-year starting monster back.

Sims, 1977 Texas state high school 440 champion (:47.7), was responsible for Lewis starting his collegiate track career as a junior. "We kept getting into these heated arguments about who was faster," Rodney says. "Sammy would tell me what he'd done and what I couldn't do. We were friends bickering over nothing. But I decided to do something about it. I went out for track and beat all his times...easily."

In the 1981 Big Eight indoor meet, Lewis finished second in the 60 and second in the 300. In the conference outdoor championships, he finished fifth in the 100 and anchored Nebraska's second-place 400 relay team.

That's not bad for a kid who looked more like the tortoise than the hare through his sophomore year of high school. "Rodney was the slowest kid we had on the team. He was painfully slow," recalls Richard Robinson, head football coach at Central High School in Minneapolis.

By his senior year, Lewis had become one of the city's five fastest sprinters. He was determined to follow prep

teammate and best friend Russell Gary to Nebraska.

Gary, Lewis' roommate for four years, became an All-Big Eight safety and second-round draft choice of the New Orleans Saints last spring. Lewis, one year and one round later, will rejoin Gary and former Nebraska Defensive Coordinator Lance Van Zandt in New Orleans.

Van Zandt, the Saints' secondary coach, never lost his admiration for Lewis even though Rodney wore a second-team gold jersey for a month last fall.

"I made some mistakes, and the coaches made some changes," Lewis said. "The thing that was lacking was my intensity; that's what I think. I was trying to do my best, but maybe it could have been better."

Lewis has always been an intense football player. "Gloom," one of his nicknames, may come, in part, from a misinterpretation of that silent intensity. "I tried to work hard, but I think I was getting to the point where I was trying too hard, and I was just becoming tense," he said.

Initially, Lewis was angered when he lost his starting job to Allen Lyday. "That's only human," he said, adding that his anger quickly turned into the determination which brought him to Nebraska as a walk-on and enabled him to earn a scholarship.

"Give up" in the face of adversity was as foreign to Lewis as it was to the whole program. "Coach Osborne explained that he wasn't giving up on me and that I should keep working," Lewis



Tom Carlstrom



Jimmy Williams



Rodney "Gloom" Lewis



said. "I evaluated my work habits and realized they had changed, so I got back to things that made me successful.

"The coaches told me they wanted me to do well. It wasn't that they didn't like me," Lewis said. "They didn't give up on me, and I never quit. I realized a football team is more than just me."

That attitude regained Lewis his starting job. He finished the season in style — starting in a national championship game under a moon over Miami. Being a third-round draft choice merely embellished the script.

Van Zandt told Lewis that New Orleans "was going to pick me in the second round, but they needed a center, so they took Brad Edelman of Missouri." New Orleans Head Coach Bum Phillips told Lewis that he'd been crossing his fingers since the middle part of the second round.

According to Lewis, Van Zandt sold the Saints on him for months. "He knows what kind of football I like to play," Rodney said. "He thinks I have the potential to be a heckuva cornerback in the NFL. I'm just glad I kept believing in myself. Everything worked its way out."

"He really impressed us in our scouting workout and in our film study," said Detroit Head Coach Monte Clark after the Lions made Williams the 16th selection in the first round, one spot ahead of UCLA offensive tackle Luis Sharpe and two spots ahead of Penn State All-American offensive guard Sean Farrell.

"He really is the guy that we targeted to get," Clark said. "He's delighted to be with us, and the choice fits in with our primary need."

Williams was the third linebacker selected in the draft, behind Mississippi State's Johnnie Cooks (Colts) and Southern Cal's Chip Banks (Browns).

Although Williams and Lewis were

the only Nebraska players chosen on the first day of the draft, three more Huskers were drafted. Defensive tackle Henry Waechter was the seventh-round choice of the Chicago Bears. Fullback Phil Bates, another walk-on, also was drafted in the seventh round, joining Williams at Detroit. Offensive guard Tom Carlstrom completed the Nebraska list, going in the 12th round to the New York Jets.

Waechter was the first defensive lineman drafted by the Bears. "Maybe this was the best thing for me," he said. "Maybe this is the best team for me to make it. Mike Ditka is a new coach with

a new staff. Chicago is close to my home in Iowa. Overall, I'm pretty lucky the way it all worked out."

Even though they weren't drafted, four other Huskers were counting their blessings. They signed free agent contracts shortly after the draft was concluded. All-Big Eight safety Jeff Krejci and wingback Anthony Steels both signed with the Philadelphia Eagles. All-Big Eight offensive tackle Dan Hurley signed with the New York Giants. Monster back Sims, one of Lewis' promoters, signed with the Seattle Seahawks. ●

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## Ask Tom Osborne

*Cornhusker backs and receivers have worn tearaway jerseys during games the last few years. The NCAA went along with the pro rule and outlawed the flimsy shirts starting this fall. What are your thoughts on the ban?*

"They've served us well. When you have real good running backs like we have had, you can get extra yards when the other team can't drag you down by the jersey. But if it's a rule, it's a rule. I don't have any strong feelings about it.

"We've used them the last three or four years, and it's given us some advantage. There aren't a whole lot of teams who use tearaways. Our I-backs go through four to six a game, but they're pretty cheap.

"I don't think the rule was changed because of the cost. It might be the delay caused by taking players out of the game when one is torn."

*Jackie Sherrill's astronomical salary as the new head coach at Texas A&M has created a lot of controversy. In fact, the salaries of football coaches in general are subject to controversy. How do you defend the lucrative salaries of the nation's top coaches?*

"The pressure to win is as great as

ever. There is some financial pressure, too, because if the team doesn't win, the attendance falls off, and that's followed very quickly by a coaching change. Football is such a big percentage of all athletic departments' budgets.

"But if you go to a coaching convention and look around, I guarantee you there aren't too many coaches 60 to 65 years old. Other than Bear Bryant, you have a hard time naming one.

"Of the so-called professions, the legal and medical, lawyers and doctors are supposed to get better with age. In the coaching profession, less than one percent ever hit 65 and actually retire as a coach.

"There's a certain amount of truth to the statement that there are only two kinds of coaches — those who have just been hired and those who have just been fired. People get upset about coaches' salaries, but you don't hear much sympathy about their lack of longevity. If you talked to Bear Bryant when he was 45, I doubt that he would have guessed he'd be coaching until now.

"He's an exception to the rule. Coaching is something you have to

take on a year-to-year basis. You're hard-pressed to say if you'll be around another 10 or 15 years because it's not always your choice."

*Southern Cal is the latest target of NCAA disciplinary action because of a coach's alleged involvement with ticket scalping. How do you feel about the enforcement procedures of the NCAA?*

"I feel very strongly that something has to be done to curb excesses in college athletics. The NCAA is the only agency set up to do that, and I feel they're working harder than ever before and hiring more enforcement people than ever before.

"I would, however, like to see more teeth put into enforcement rather than just probation. There are too many coaches who get off scot-free and too many athletes who get off scot-free.

"There should be stiffer penalties for coaches who cheat on a large scale and players who knowingly take things. I think there is too much tacit approval of getting the job done any way you can get it done.

"Probation is the easy way out. The coach moves on to another job in pro football and never pays the consequences. He shouldn't be able to coach for three to five years or maybe even be banned forever.

"And players involved in cheating should lose their eligibility immediately. TV bans and bowl game bans don't always do the job. Some — many of the schools who cheat — aren't going to be on TV or go to bowl games anyway.

"There are a lot of examples of teams that have become good in a hurry. The biggest problem I see with the NCAA is that its process for punishment is so long and drawn out, it penalizes people who weren't involved." ●

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If you have questions for Coach Tom Osborne, write to the *Huskers Illustrated*, Box 83222, Lincoln, NE 68501. We reserve the right to select only those questions we feel appropriate.

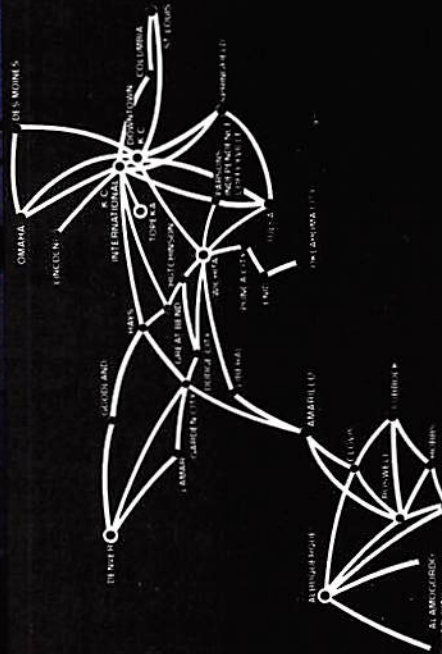


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*The look on the face of Nebraska baseball coach John Sanders tells the story. The Huskers found themselves in the middle of a nightmare at All Sports Stadium in Oklahoma City and never woke up until it was too late.*

## **Huskers' Heartache Continues in Big Eight**

*Exhausted pitching staff cuffed around in league tournament as Nebraska fails to gain NCAA bid.*

**T**he helplessness Ray Tromba felt, just minutes after the seventh-ranked Cornhuskers were eliminated from the Big Eight Conference tournament at All Sports Stadium in Oklahoma City, characterized not only the tournament but the entire 1982 Nebraska baseball season.

Oklahoma and a freshman pitcher named Darrell Rodgers were the immediate cause of Tromba's despair.

Rodgers went the distance, limiting Nebraska to seven base hits in an 8-2 victory. His effort was impressive enough to earn him recognition on the all-tournament team.

In two previous games, those same Cornhuskers had pounded out 32 hits, losing to Oklahoma 12-8 in the tournament's opening-round but coming back to eliminate Missouri, 10-5, in the second round. Rodgers, however, lost control in only two innings. During the middle innings, he retired 11 NU batters in a row.

"It's a heartache to keep coming down here and seeing it end like this," Tromba said, trying to articulate something which could not be expressed with words.

Twice Tromba had pitched for Nebraska in the annual

tournament, on teams which finished second and earned at-large bids into NCAA regional competition. Last season, his first as the Cornhuskers' pitching coach, the team finished second in the tournament to Oklahoma State but didn't receive a regional bid.

This year, despite the third-place finish, Tromba and the rest of the team, from head coach John Sanders on down, expected at-large consideration from the NCAA when it began the process of filling a 36-team field leading into the College World Series. "If we get an at-large berth, we get a new breath of life in a four-team tournament," Tromba said.

But no bid came.

Nebraska had the endorsement of the Big Eight Conference, but the NCAA chose to ignore that support and picked Oklahoma, instead. The 54-game regular season, which included 20 conference games, meant nothing. It all came down to one game, really, a game Nebraska lost.

One day later, Sanders was shaken by the announcement that his team had been overlooked by the NCAA.

He had considered his team's chances of getting a bid, not just being considered for one, "pretty good." Sanders admitted the loss to Oklahoma didn't enhance those chances, but "I'd like to think we're one of the top 36 teams in the country," he said.

Regional bid or not, that was true. Though its season ended in understandable disappointment, Nebraska played well until the tournament and finished with a 44-13 record, the fourth straight year in which Sanders' team won more than 40 games. The Cornhuskers finished 15-5 during the Big Eight regular season and split a four-game series with Oklahoma State, the league champion.

Nebraska opened conference play against the Cowboys in Lincoln after a 14-4 start which included winning the

championship of the Pan American Citrus Tournament at Edinburg, Texas. The Cornhuskers won the title game, 2-0, on Harold Bright's home run with a man on base. The victory over Central Michigan was especially pleasing to Bright, who wasn't recruited by the Chippewas when he was graduated by Detroit's Munford High School.

During its spring trip, Nebraska extended a winning streak to 10 games before losing to Michigan, 4-1.

Sanders said his team was hitting and getting good pitching. The Cornhusker staff had been hit hard in three of five games during a season-opening series in Las Vegas, but from then on, it had taken charge.

Jeff Johnson, a highly-regarded transfer from Glendale Junior College, was experiencing arm problems which would sideline him for the season, but sophomore Chris Knust drew the attention of professional scouts during the Texas trip by proving he could pitch.

Knust, a multi-sport athlete at Omaha Creighton Prep High School, came to Nebraska as a football quarterback, spent his freshman season on the scout squad, and decided he'd rather play baseball.

He was used primarily in relief, finishing with a 5-0 record and a 3.48 earned-run average.

At any rate, when Oklahoma State came to Buck Beltzer Field to start a four-game series, the Cowboys were 19-5 and ranked 13th in the nation. Nebraska was ranked 16th.

Todd Oakes, a transfer from Waldorf Junior College in

Forest City, Iowa, by way of Spring Grove, Minn., drew the assignment as Nebraska's starting pitcher against the Cowboys. The junior college All-American had won four games without a loss, a record to which Oklahoma State added a 4-2 blemish.

The second game of the double-header, which began late Saturday afternoon, was completed on Sunday afternoon after darkness forced a suspension after seven innings. The score was tied 2-2.

The teams played four more innings on Sunday, with Nebraska winning 4-3, then coming back to take another nine-inning battle, 11-4.

Monday the series concluded with an 11-10 Oklahoma State victory, gained in spite of a grand slam home run by NU first baseman Steve Stanicek. The home run was Stanicek's fifth of the season, one of a school record 20 he would hit.

The junior from Park Forest, Ill., had rewritten much of the school record book by season's end. Stanicek set individual season records for home runs, runs-batted-in (70), doubles (19), hits (83), runs scored (73), and total bases (173).

His total bases also established Big Eight records, both for a single season and for a career.

Stanicek would have set an NCAA single-season record for slugging percentage if he had gotten 15 more official at-bats. The NCAA qualifying standard is 200 at-bats, minimum. Bill Max of the University of Las Vegas set the

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NCAA record for slugging percentage at .864. Even if Stanicek had gone 0-15, he would have topped that mark.

In addition to his NU single-season records, Stanicek also set school career marks in home runs (42) and doubles (44), and tied Joe Scherger's record for career RBIs (173). Stanicek equaled Scherger's four-year total in three years.

After splitting four games with Oklahoma State, Nebraska traveled to Columbia, Mo., for its second Big Eight series. The Tigers ambushed the Cornhuskers on the first day, sweeping a double-header by scores of 15-0 and 7-6. But the second day, Nebraska proved its mettle by winning 4-1 behind the pitching of sophomore Anthony Kelley and 11-1 behind freshman left-hander Jeff Koenigsman, who was forced into the starting rotation when veteran Steve Gehrke had to be left in Lincoln to rest a sore arm.

For two seasons Gehrke had been a "stopper" on the mound for the Cornhuskers, but the sore arm never responded enough for him to be effective during his junior season. As a freshman and sophomore in Nebraska's Big Eight rotation, Gehrke worked 148 2/3 innings.

His combined record was 15-6 with a 3.39 earned-run average.

As a junior, he pitched only 23 1/3 innings in five games, winning two and losing one, with an untypical 5.79 ERA. A healthy Gehrke would have made a big difference, particularly at Big Eight tournament time. A year ago, he won two games in Oklahoma City and was an all-tournament team selection.

The double-header sweep of Missouri initiated a nine-game Cornhusker winning streak which included a four-game sweep of conference rival Kansas State. Stanicek owned the Wildcats, going 13-for-19 at the plate (.684) to raise his season batting average to .510 and extend a personal hitting streak to 15 games. Included in his 13 hits were three doubles, a triple, and a home run. He drove in seven runs.

Such statistics seemed more appropriate for a slow pitch softball player. For the offensive show he put on at Buck Belzer Field that weekend, Stanicek was chosen the Big Eight's "Player of the Week."

Every Cornhusker was using the same aluminum bat...Stanicek's.

Creighton stopped Nebraska's winning streak at nine games in the first game of a non-conference double-header at Omaha's Rosenblatt Stadium, the annual site of the College World Series. The 5-4 defeat ruined an otherwise pleasant day for Sanders, who learned his team had been rated eighth in the nation by *Collegiate Baseball* newspaper that morning, not long before getting the signature of Bill McGuire, a highly-recruited athlete from Omaha Creighton Prep High School, on a national letter of intent.

McGuire, who will come to Nebraska as a catcher next season if he doesn't turn professional, is "one of the top 10 receivers in the country at the high school level," Sanders said. "He can play right away."

The disappointment of the loss to Creighton was quickly erased in the second game of the double-header when Nebraska hit a Big Eight record, six home runs on the way to an 11-4 victory.

Third baseman Dan Tomich hit a pair of towering,

370-foot home runs, and Bright, Bill Hendricks, Dan Boever, and Kurt Eubanks hit one apiece during the binge. "Judging from the second game, I'd have to agree that Nebraska is the eighth best team in the nation," said Creighton head coach Dave Underwood, a former NU assistant.

The victory was tempered by the loss of outfielder Dave Bailor, who was well on his way to breaking the NU single-season record for stolen bases when he twisted his left knee sliding into second base in an attempt to break up a double play.

Two and a half weeks later, Bailor underwent arthroscopic surgery on the knee. He missed 16 games, but just 10 days after the surgery, in a game against Wayne State, the junior from Connellsville, Pa., and brother of the New York Mets' Bob Bailor, was back in uniform, playing left field.

Nebraska won three of four in its next Big Eight series, against Iowa State in Ames. Boever hit two home runs in the lone loss, 12-11, in the second game of the first day's double-header. A transfer from West Arkansas Junior College, the native of Remsen, Iowa, showed surprising power for a shortstop throughout the season. Boever finished with 11 home runs, 48 RBIs, and a .329 batting average.

He was one of seven Cornhusker regulars who finished the season hitting over .300. The others included Stanicek (.449), Mark Mauer (.388), Eubanks (.340), Roger Hill (.338), Tomich (.312), and Hendricks (.306). The team cumulative batting average was a school record .321.

Paced by the bats of Stanicek, Boever, Tomich and Ben Amaya, Nebraska also established a single-season school record for home runs with 59.

Tomich, yet another junior college transfer, hit seven home runs and drove in 44 runs. Amaya also hit seven home runs.

With victories over Iowa State in the final two games of that series, Nebraska went on an 11-game winning streak, its longest of the season. That skein stretched through four Big Eight games with Kansas and ended, again, with a game against Creighton. The sweep of Kansas ensured Nebraska of a berth in the conference post-season tournament.

The Cornhuskers' final Big Eight series was set for Norman, Okla., against the Oklahoma Sooners, with Nebraska drawing a bye on the final weekend of regular-season Big Eight play. That's when the season began to go stale for the Cornhuskers, who had played so well until then.

Inclement weather finally forced the cancellation of the Oklahoma series, and Nebraska sat idle for nearly two weeks, waiting for a break in the weather and a chance to play, either at home or on the road.

By the Big Eight tournament, the healthy Cornhusker pitchers were arm weary. In three games, they allowed 36 hits and 20 earned runs. "Our bats went silent in key situations, and our pitching was poor; we didn't get the 'stopper' effort when we needed it," Sanders said, emphasizing that "performance" should not be confused with "effort." There was plenty of the latter.

Nebraska tried hard at the end but came up short. The disappointment was written on Ray Tromba's face. The way it ended was a "heartache," he said. ●

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# Football Forecasting: A Science Or Blind Luck?

Text By Wayne Bishop

Original Art By Margie Gaeddert



**C**lemson and Minnesota. Those two schools have certainly managed to avoid the tag of "football powers" over the past few decades. And yet both share a little part of football history.

The Tigers, or Paws if you will, joined the Golden Gophers of the Big 10 last year as the only schools to ever begin the football season without men-

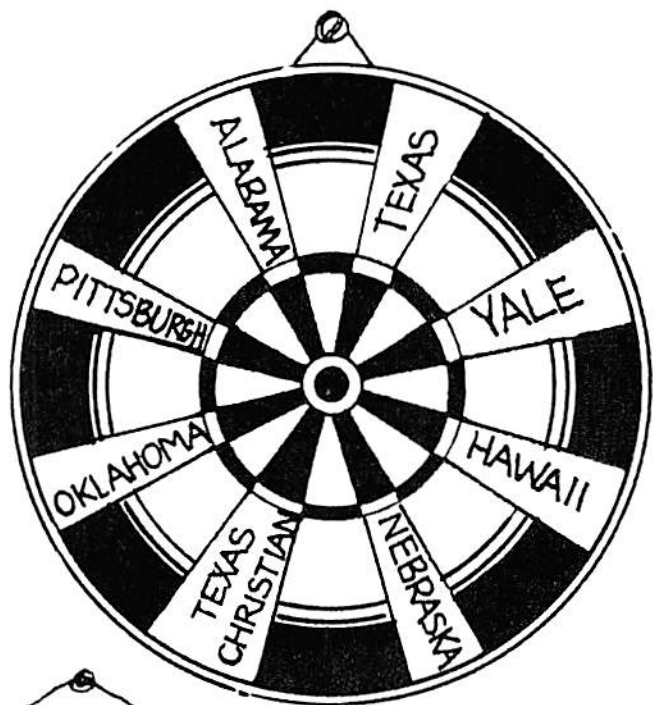
tion in the Associated Press pre-season Top 20 and wind up on top of them all.

Minnesota turned the trick a mere 22 years ago when it began the football season ranked nowhere and began its climb to the No. 1 spot on the Sept. 27 poll when it made its first appearance — No. 18. By the second week in October the Gophers were No. 10 and finally, after top-ranked Iowa was knocked off, Minnesota took over the No. 1 berth in

the Nov. 8 poll and stayed there, holding off Mississippi.

Ironically, the Gophers were whipped by Washington in the Rose Bowl to finish 8-2 on the season. But at that time the final AP poll was taken before the bowl games.

Clemson's emergence as the only unbeaten team and national champion last year follows a season in which Georgia soared from a pre-season No.



Parity. College football coaches are moaning about it. And now those who rate college football may be doing the same.

No longer can you take the same 10 to 15 schools, throw them in a hat and draw them out one at a time with reasonable certainty that they'll all be among the best in the land after the last bowl game has been played.

Lurking down there in the ranks could be another Clemson or Minnesota.

Doug Looney, who is part of the pre-season selection process at *Sports Illustrated* and who covers college football regularly each year, agrees the job has become a lot tougher.

"I don't know just how much the Top 20 has changed," said Looney. "There have obviously been some new faces along the way, with Clemson being the most striking example of that. I know I didn't think anything of Clemson last year. It's one of those things where if I had it to do over again I'd do it just the same way.

"But it's harder and harder to get those games that are absolute locks. And I think the perfect case to point to, and what made last year such a topsyturvy season, is that when Wisconsin beat Michigan first jump out of the box — and I would not back up in that Michigan was a solid pick — but when Wisconsin beat Michigan, that just immediately showed everybody that all things are possible. And I think that was the crux of the matter.

"Also, what's getting harder is with the independents. They're playing good, tough schedules in most instances. Nobody can make fun of Notre Dame's schedule. Nobody can make fun really of Pitt's schedule, although it's not as tough. And Penn State has just been playing horrendous schedules."

And therein lies one of the keys to football predictions in this decade: schedules.

Last summer it was pointed out in this magazine that Georgia and Pitt would have tough times losing games with the schedules they had. Even though they lost heavily to graduation (Pitt had only one returning starter on defense), they had schedules groomed for Top 10 seasons.

Start with a tough conference schedule, throw in a couple of rugged non-conference foes and even the best of teams is going to have difficulty going unbeaten. And sometimes the best team is not going to finish No. 1. There's going to be a Clemson or a Georgia that only has to get "up" for one or two really major tests.

Herschel Nissenson is the college football editor for the Associated Press. He has been counting ballots from writers and broadcasters all across the country every week during the football season for more than a decade.

And, although he does not vote, he takes the business of ratings very seriously. Nissenson does not feel things have gotten that much tougher.

"When you get right down to it, the same people you always see are in it (the ratings), for the most part," said Nissenson. "You have an Arizona State in the last 10 years that has really come along. Or Clemson in the last year or so. Georgia has always been some sort of a power. So I don't really think it's all that much tougher.

"At this time a year ago it seems all you heard was Michigan. This year I have not heard anybody. A little bit Pitt. Last year I could have told you at this time that Michigan would be No. 1 (in pre-season)."

Although Georgia and Clemson back-to-back might throw a scare into those who make college football predictions, Nissenson has some ammunition to back him up.

In research done by this writer, it was found that the Associated Press began its pre-season college football rankings in 1950. Since that first poll, which was

15 ranking to its first national crown.

In fact, last year's top three teams in a composite ranking based on 15 major magazine and newspaper pre-season polls all finished out of the final Top 10 (Michigan, Oklahoma and Notre Dame). And Southern Cal, the No. 5 team, also fell out of the elite.

Was 1981 a freak year, or was it the start of a new era in making pre-season football forecasts?

The 30-95 scholarship limitation rule.



topped by Notre Dame, only six times have the voters picked the eventual national champion correctly. Tennessee was voted No. 1 in the 1951 pre-season chart and won it all. Michigan State did the same in 1952. So those AP voters had to be feeling pretty good about themselves.

Since then, however, only Oklahoma in 1956, 1974 and 1975 and then Alabama in 1978 have made it through the cycle.

There have been some great longshot winners, however. Ohio State came from No. 20 to win the 1954 national crown. Then in 1957, when Oklahoma's pre-season favorites lost to Notre Dame, Auburn roared from No. 15 in pre-season to its lone national crown.

In one of the great stories of this AP ratings game Syracuse started at No. 20 in 1959 and proceeded to whip 11 straight foes, including Texas in the Cotton Bowl. With the great Ernie Davis returning, the Orangemen received all but three first-place votes in the pre-season poll in 1960 (the first year for a new format by the AP in which voting was restricted to a 48-member panel of regional representatives — up until then every writer and broadcaster had been eligible to vote).

As has happened so often in cases where the voters tried to make amends, Syracuse folded and finished 20th.

Iowa was the pick in 1961 and did not finish in the Top 20. Ohio State was accorded top honors before the 1962 season and did not find a spot in the Top 20 at season's end. Mississippi was the 1964 choice, but plummeted out of sight quickly. And even Southern Cal proved not immune to the pre-season "jinx," as the Trojans were toasted in 1963 and failed to dent the final list of the elite.

Thus, in those five consecutive years the pre-season choice could finish no better than 20th in the final ratings. It was the AP's version of the Great Depression...the 1961 Phillies...the 1976 Tampa Bay Bucs.

What makes 1980 and 1981 so shocking is the fact that the pollsters had been so GOOD the previous decade or so. Southern Cal and Alabama were 1-2 in 1979 and finished 2-1. Alabama, as mentioned, won it from start to finish in 1978 (although the United Press International rankings by college coaches had it Southern Cal and then Alabama). Notre Dame won it in 1977 after starting the season at No. 3. Pitt went from

ninth to first in 1976 after Oklahoma had won its two in a row.

Prior to that, the only time that a non-Top 10 pre-season pick made it to No. 1 on the final poll from 1963 on was in 1968 when Ohio State climbed from 11th to first, passing pre-season No. 1 Purdue on its way down to 10th.

"Clemson wasn't even in our pre-season Top 20 last year," said Nissen-son, who shouldn't feel bad about that. The Tigers appeared only on the pre-season lists of *Football Action* (20th), *Football Roundup* (18th), *Game Plan* (19th) and *Football Weekly* (20th).

"Coaches all tell you that this 30-95 rule has given parity. And I think they're right to an extent. I don't think it's made anybody weaker. It's made a lot of teams stronger. Guys who would normally be sitting on the bench for Oklahoma and Nebraska are now playing at Oklahoma State and Iowa State. You may be two-deep at each position if you're a real power, but beyond that just forget it."

Jerry McCoin has been making pre-season forecasts for the past 16 years. The publisher of *Athlon* magazine out of the deep South, McCoin believes strongly in looking over schedules before putting himself out on a limb.

"The 30 (scholarship) rule has made a big change — the biggest since I started doing the magazine," McCoin stated. "You always ought to look at schedules."

*Street and Smith's*, one of the nation's oldest and most respected football annuals, relies on editor Gerard Kavanaugh for its pre-season picks. He, in turn, relies on writers from different parts of the country who cover college football and provide their opinions on what the season holds in store for the powers.

"Scheduling is certainly a big factor," said Kavanaugh. "I don't think Clemson would have gone unbeaten if they had played, say, Penn State or Notre Dame's schedule. They go through the ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference), which is usually not as tough as many other conferences."

"We'll go through schedules — where we have our schedule chart in the back with favorites and underdogs — and it's tough for a top team to go through a schedule undefeated if they play a tough schedule — like the Florida State schedule last year where they had five tough games in a row."

"We had Georgia rated high the last

couple of years, but they didn't play Mississippi State or Alabama, two of the toughest teams in the country and also in their conference. So you don't know...they might have beaten them if they had played, or they might not have."

"There are no safe choices any more in pre-season ratings. Anyone can beat anyone else. And I really like that part of it. That's what the college game is all about. Enthusiasm."

The Southeast Conference annually creates a stir when it comes to schedules and ratings. For years Alabama was accused of a soft schedule that avoided tougher members of the league. Recently, Georgia has been a benefactor of a conference scheduling system that seldom has all of the top teams playing each other.

Looney was asked about the Southeast Conference scheduling format.

"Oh, no, it all has to do with the position of the moon in the sky. Also tidal waves," he laughed. "No one's really sure how it's determined. I did not pay that much attention to schedules the previous decade when I did my pre-season forecast. But schedules are so darned tricky."

"This year I don't know who we're going to rank No. 1. However, Pitt opens against North Carolina. North Carolina's tough. We don't want to pick, particularly, a No. 1 team and have them lose first jump out of the box. And I assume others might feel the same way. Now, how is that going to affect our pick? Well, I suspect it's going to affect it quite a bit. And Nebraska and Penn State play each other early and the Huskers are liable to get their ears pinned back in that one."

"The underlying point on schedules is that they have gotten a lot tougher; they make it very hard for anybody to go undefeated; and if I were making schedules for, say, Oklahoma in the next 15 years, I would not be bashful about putting Rice on my schedule. Just because Oklahoma's going to be national champions if they go 12 and 0 anyway, just because it has to play Texas and Nebraska and somebody else tough in the Big Eight. So I say 15 years from now why schedule Ohio State? They're going to sell out anyway."

"And if I can make a small point for humanity, with these players going up against these big, rough, tough teams all the time, particularly playing on ar-

tificial turf where the wrecks are tougher, those players just can't do that week in and week out. I would be careful not to schedule myself a disaster. It looks like there'll be plenty of television to go around for everyone, so that's not a reason to do it. I'll bet a lot of schools start pulling in their horns a little bit and quit going from one side of the country to the other. And if you

plained McCain, who said he was picking Nebraska second in the country this year "regardless of whether or not Turner Gill is fully recovered."

What makes the football ratings more important to fans is the fact that there is no post-season tournament to select a national champion. Only the ratings by the Associated Press and UPI.

**'I'd rather not do it after you come out looking foolish. But I enjoy doing them. It's just that too many people take them too seriously. You never hear from the people when you do a good job of picking the Top 15.'**

go 12 and 0, you're still going to be national champions. When's the last time that an unbeaten team did not win the national championship?"

The Associated Press still used the regional voting system for its pre-season and weekly polls. A total of 65 to 68 writers and broadcasters send in ballots each Sunday and Monday, with Nissenson personally taking on the chore of counting the votes.

At *Sports Illustrated* Looney explains, "They ask several of us to make up some lists of how we think they (the college teams) look. So I do that. And we usually do one pretty early, and then as we get down to it then we argue about it. Ultimately, it comes down to the fellow who runs the magazine — at least it's his stamp of approval on it. Which doesn't mean it's right. It's just his stamp of approval. He says, 'I don't know. Go ahead.'"

"But we get reports from all of our correspondents around the country. We ask them a bunch of questions — a lot of routine things like lettermen coming back, returning starters and all this. We get a pretty good appraisal of what it looks like. A good example is Oklahoma this year, where I think there's room for plenty of concern."

McCain, who also travels to all corners of the college football world in the fall, relies more on reports from college coaches than correspondents. "I really think they know a helluva lot more than the writers."

Most of the forecasters take the job pretty seriously. Some would prefer to keep it in its proper perspective. But college football fans won't permit it.

"It's fun, but it's also a chore," ex-

"In everything else you have a tournament," McCain offered. "One of the things that has made college football unique is the bowls. And the polls. I'm just sort of an old fashioned guy. I hate to see something that's good for college football cut out just to make it like everything else. Plus, I have a lot of good friends with the bowls and they live in fear every day of that (a national championship tournament). I don't think the polls have made that many mistakes in picking a national champion, but if we do, so what? I just think it's healthy, plus I think the bowls are a phenomena. If you get rid of them or if you try to make them a site for just a playoff game, you'll destroy one of the greatest things that America sports have ever had."

Kavanagh commented, "I'm still trying to make up my mind on the system for determining a national champion. The coaches are pretty well split, too. There are a lot of arguments for both sides. I think they're (the ratings) fun. It's great for each school. I don't think it should be life and death involvement, though. No one can predict what's going to happen all the time, and that's what makes it interesting."

"I'd rather not do it after you come out looking foolish. But I enjoy doing them. It's just that too many people take them too seriously. You never hear from the people when you do a good job of picking the Top 15. But I heard a lot the last couple of years from the Brigham Young fans when I didn't pick their team."

Looney responded, "At *Sports Illustrated* we take it seriously. We just aren't very good at it. Whoever we pick

No. 1, I'd bet my wife on it. But I wouldn't bet five dollars."

Although Nissenson cannot vote, he keeps a close eye on those who do for the AP.

"I make notes to myself throughout the year," he explained. "And at the end of the year I find that there are a few guys — five or so, maybe — that I'll write about to our people across the country and say, 'Let's make sure this guy's not on it next year.' It's not necessarily because I think he's prejudiced one way or the other, or that he's not doing a good job. It may be because we have to go hunting him down every week. That really burns me."

"But I can understand it. This is not their primary function in life. They have assignments, stories to do. The only time we have ever thrown a guy out in the middle of the season was 1973, I think. It was a voter from West Virginia."

"As I recall, the first two weeks of the season he had them (West Virginia) No. 3 and they won, so you can't really argue. In 1977 there was only one guy who went for Texas early, and that was a guy from Boston, of all places. He had seen Texas beat Boston College, 44-0. And as it turned out at the end of the regular season they (Texas) were 11-0. Back to West Virginia, though, the third week of the season they lose to Indiana and this guy moves them up to No. 2."

"It may have been inadvertent. But I doubt it. I've been doing this 13 years, and you develop a feel after a while for when a guy has intentionally overlooked somebody or unintentionally done it. I think most of the voters we have are doing a conscientious job."

*Sports Illustrated* has not always agreed with that assessment. In a copywrited story by Walter Bingham in the Sept. 18, 1978 issue ("Going To The Polls, Weakly"), *Sports Illustrated* criticized both the AP and the UPI.

In that story, Bingham pointed out the importance of that pre-season poll.

"The AP poll, which was started in 1936, is compiled this year from the votes of 69 newspaper writers, television reporters and radiomen; the UPI, 14 years younger, reflects the opinions of 42 head coaches. Not only do these 111 men — and they are all men — rank the teams during the season, but they also cast their ballots in preseason polls, which, in effect, establish the morning line in the four-month race for No. 1."



As we shall see, of all the polls, the preseason one, which is the most subjective, is also one of the most significant."

Bingham goes on to zero in on coaches who reportedly hand over their voting rights to sports information directors and on reporters who find it easy to succumb to the suggestions of those same SIDs to support their team.

He then pointed to the previous football season (1977), when Arkansas lost only to Texas (13-9) and "yet entering the bowl games, the Razorbacks were ranked sixth behind four other teams with 10-1 records and never had a chance to become No. 1. Granted someone had to bring up the rear, but why Arkansas? Well, it's really very simple. The Razorbacks began the season ranked, as Lou Holtz put it,

"76th or something." Certainly they weren't in either the AP or UPI preseason Top 20 as the other 10-1 teams had been."

Bingham then listed the "five basic rules, unwritten rules to be sure, for winning a national championship, and the Irish (Notre Dame won the national title that year) followed them all. They are:

"(1) Get yourself on national television, more than once, if possible, and when you do, win.

"(2) If you must lose a game during the season (and one is the limit), do it early.

"(3) Don't let the athletic director talk you into dropping Kansas State and adding Oklahoma, even if it's for 1985.

"(4) Win by as big a number as possible, and be ready to justify it later.

"(5) At bowl time, play the highest-ranked team you can find, unless you are already No. 1, in which case play someone respectable but beatable."

A team which starts the season in the Top 10 and remains unbeaten is going to have the edge on a team which (like Clemson) begins the fall out of the Top 20 and goes unbeaten. For that reason, the pre-season voting is important. But Clemson did not even dent the Top 20 until the third week of 1981, when they started a climb from 19 to 14 to 9 and then on to 6, 4, 3 and 2 for four straight weeks before finally latching onto the top spot.

It can be done.

And with parity spreading like an ugly blemish on the power structure of college football, it may be done with more regularity than ever in the future.

## 1981 PRE-SEASON RANKINGS

Here are the pre-season rankings of 15 of the major publications from last fall. For the sake of comparisons, here are the final **Associated Press** rankings from last season: 1. Clemson; 2. Texas; 3. Penn State; 4. Pitt; 5. Southern Methodist; 6. Georgia; 7. Alabama; 8. Miami, Fla.; 9. North Carolina; 10. Washington.

11. Nebraska; 12. Michigan; 13. Brigham Young; 14. Southern Cal; 15. Ohio State; 16. Arizona State; 17. West Virginia; 18. Iowa; 19. Missouri; 20. Oklahoma.

	Football Action	Football Roundup	Street and Smith's	Game Plan	Athlon's	Football Weekly	Football News	Playboy	Sports Illustrated	Sport	Inside Sports	United Press	Goal Post	Football Illustrated	Associated Press
1. Michigan	1	10	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	1	2	1	1
2. Oklahoma	3	2	5	2	2	3	1	3	4	2	3	2	3	4	2
3. Notre Dame	4	4	3	3	8	4	3	14	5	5	2	4	1	3	3
4. Alabama	2	1	6	6	3	2	4	6	8	3	11	3	4	6	4
5. Southern Cal	5	6	2	12	5	5	6	2	3	14	1	5	8	10	5
6. Nebraska	7	9	12	5	12	7	5	9	7	6	13	6	7	7	6
7. Texas	8	3	9	4	9	8	7	13	2	12	7	10	15	2	9
8. Penn State	10	14	13	10	10	10	8	12	6	4	5	7	10	8	7
9. Pittsburgh	6	5	7	8	13	6	11	15	12	11	12	9	12	5	8
10. Georgia	9	.	10	.	4	9	14	.	11	10	9	8	14	11	10
11. North Carolina	15	11	8	15	11	15	15	10	10	.	8	14	18	9	12
12. UCLA	.	20	11	7	.	.	9	11	9	9	10	12	5	17	13
13. Ohio State	13	19	15	13	6	13	10	.	14	16	16	11	6	13	11
14. Florida	19	17	.	.	7	19	.	4	.	13	6	16	11	.	17
15. Mississippi State	14	.	4	16	.	14	13	20	16	.	.	15	17	14	14
16. Washington	17	15	14	.	14	17	.	.	15	7	.	17	.	.	15
17. Brigham Young	12	8	.	.	.	12	.	17	18	.	14	19	20	20	16
18. Arizona State	.	.	.	9	.	.	12	7	.	.	20	.	16	12	20
19. Baylor	.	12	.	17	18	.	.	8	20	.	18	20	9	.	.
20. Florida State	.	7	.	.	16	.	.	.	13	.	.	13	.	.	19
21. Southern Methodist	.	.	.	11	.	.	16	.	.	17	17	.	13	15	.
22. Houston	16	.	.	.	17	16	19	5	.	.	.	18	.	.	.
23. Louisiana State	.	.	.	14	15	.	20	16	19	15	19	.	19	.	.
24. Miami of Florida	11	16	.	.	.	11	18	.	.	.	.	.	.	18	.
25. Stanford	18	.	.	18	19	18	17	.	17	.	15	.	.	.	18
26. Arkansas	.	.	.	.	20	.	.	.	.	8	.	.	.	.	.
27. Oregon	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	18	.	.	.	.	.	16	.
28. Central Michigan	.	13	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
29. Clemson	20	18	.	19	.	20	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
30. Iowa State	.	.	.	20	.	.	.	19	.	.	.	.	.	19	.

# Associated Press Pre-Season, Final Rankings

Pre-Season in left-hand column for each year. Final ratings in right-hand column.

<b>1950</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Army 3. Michigan 4. Tennessee 5. Texas 6. Oklahoma 7. Stanford 8. Illinois 9. Cornell 10. SMU	<b>1950</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Army 3. Texas 4. Tennessee 5. California 6. Princeton 7. Kentucky 8. Michigan State 9. Michigan 10. Clemson	<b>1950</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Oklahoma 3. Notre Dame 4. Michigan State 5. Auburn 6. Mississippi 7. Navy 8. TCU 9. Army 10. North Carolina	<b>1950</b> 1. Louisiana State 2. Iowa 3. Army 4. Auburn 5. Oklahoma 6. Air Force 7. Wisconsin 8. Ohio State 9. Syracuse 10. TCU	<b>1950</b> 1. Alabama 2. Michigan State 3. Nebraska 4. UCLA 5. Arkansas 6. Notre Dame 7. Syracuse 8. Purdue 9. Southern Cal 10. Tennessee	<b>1950</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Michigan State 3. Alabama 4. Georgia 5. UCLA 6. Nebraska 7. Purdue 8. Georgia Tech 9. Miami 10. SMU	<b>1950</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Ohio State 3. Notre Dame 4. Ohio State 5. Southern Cal 6. Michigan 7. Nebraska 8. Penn State 9. Louisiana State 10. Texas	<b>1974</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Southern Cal 3. Michigan 4. Ohio State 5. Alabama 6. Notre Dame 7. Penn State 8. Auburn 9. Nebraska 10. Miami, Ohio
<b>1951</b> 1. Tennessee 2. Michigan State 3. Ohio State 4. Oklahoma 5. California 6. Texas A&M 7. Kentucky 8. Washington 9. Alabama 10. Illinois	<b>1951</b> 1. Tennessee 2. Michigan State 3. Maryland 4. Illinois 5. Georgia Tech 6. Princeton 7. Stanford 8. Wisconsin 9. Baylor 10. Oklahoma	<b>1951</b> 1. Louisiana State 2. Oklahoma 3. Auburn 4. SMU 5. Army 6. Wisconsin 7. Ohio State 8. Mississippi 9. Iowa 10. Northwestern	<b>1951</b> 1. Syracuse 2. Mississippi 3. Louisiana State 4. Texas 5. Georgia 6. Wisconsin 7. TCU 8. Washington 9. Arkansas 10. Alabama	<b>1951</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Alabama 3. Michigan State 4. Texas 5. Miami 6. Georgia 7. Southern Cal 8. UCLA 9. Tennessee 10. Colorado	<b>1951</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Tennessee 3. Oklahoma 4. Indiana 5. Notre Dame 6. Wyoming 7. Oregon State 8. Alabama 9. Purdue 10. Penn State	<b>1951</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Alabama 3. Michigan 4. Ohio State 5. Southern Cal 6. Penn State 7. Nebraska 8. Auburn 9. Texas A&M 10. Notre Dame	<b>1975</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Arizona State 3. Alabama 4. Ohio State 5. UCLA 6. Texas 7. Arkansas 8. Michigan 9. Nebraska 10. Penn State
<b>1952</b> 1. Michigan State 2. Maryland 3. Georgia Tech 4. Oklahoma 5. Illinois 6. Tennessee 7. Wisconsin 8. California 9. Texas Christian 10. Notre Dame	<b>1952</b> 1. Michigan State 2. Georgia Tech 3. Notre Dame 4. Oklahoma 5. Southern Cal 6. UCLA 7. Mississippi 8. Tennessee 9. Alabama 10. Texas	<b>1952</b> 1. Syracuse 2. Mississippi 3. Washington 4. Texas 5. Illinois 6. Southern Cal 7. Pittsburgh 8. Michigan State 9. Clemson 10. Oklahoma	<b>1952</b> 1. Minnesota 2. Mississippi 3. Iowa 4. Navy 5. Missouri 6. Washington 7. Arkansas 8. Ohio State 9. Alabama 10. Duke	<b>1952</b> 1. Purdue 2. Southern Cal 3. Notre Dame 4. Oklahoma 5. Texas 6. Oregon State 7. Florida 8. Penn State 9. Tennessee 10. Alabama	<b>1952</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Penn State 3. Texas 4. Southern Cal 5. Notre Dame 6. Arkansas 7. Kansas 8. Georgia 9. Missouri 10. Purdue	<b>1952</b> 1. Nebraska 2. Michigan 3. Arizona State 4. Ohio State 5. Oklahoma 6. Alabama 7. Texas 8. Southern Cal 9. Pittsburgh 10. Penn State	<b>1976</b> 1. Pittsburgh 2. Southern Cal 3. Michigan 4. Houston 5. Oklahoma 6. Ohio State 7. Texas A&M 8. Maryland 9. Nebraska 10. Georgia
<b>1953</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Michigan State 3. Georgia Tech 4. UCLA 5. Alabama 6. Oklahoma 7. Ohio State 8. Southern Cal 9. Maryland 10. Duke	<b>1953</b> 1. Maryland 2. Notre Dame 3. Michigan State 4. Oklahoma 5. UCLA 6. Rice 7. Illinois 8. Georgia Tech 9. Iowa 10. West Virginia	<b>1953</b> 1. Iowa 2. Ohio State 3. Alabama 4. Texas 5. Louisiana State 6. Michigan State 7. Penn State 8. Kansas 9. Mississippi 10. Syracuse	<b>1953</b> 1. Alabama 2. Ohio State 3. Texas 4. Louisiana State 5. Mississippi 6. Minnesota 7. Colorado 8. Michigan State 9. Arkansas 10. Utah State	<b>1953</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Arkansas 3. Penn State 4. Texas 5. Southern Cal 6. Oklahoma 7. Houston 8. Georgia 9. Mississippi 10. Missouri	<b>1953</b> 1. Texas 2. Penn State 3. Southern Cal 4. Ohio State 5. Notre Dame 6. Missouri 7. Arkansas 8. Mississippi 9. Michigan 10. Louisiana State	<b>1953</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Michigan 3. Notre Dame 4. Southern Cal 5. Ohio State 6. Alabama 7. Pittsburgh 8. Texas Tech 9. Texas A&M 10. Maryland	<b>1977</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Alabama 3. Arkansas 4. Texas 5. Penn State 6. Kentucky 7. Oklahoma 8. Pittsburgh 9. Michigan 10. Washington
<b>1954</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Oklahoma 3. Maryland 4. Texas 5. Illinois 6. Michigan State 7. Georgia Tech 8. UCLA 9. Wisconsin 10. Mississippi	<b>1954</b> 1. Ohio State 2. UCLA 3. Oklahoma 4. Notre Dame 5. Navy 6. Mississippi 7. Army 8. Maryland 9. Wisconsin 10. Arkansas	<b>1954</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Texas 3. Alabama 4. Michigan State 5. Louisiana State 6. Mississippi 7. Purdue 8. Duke 9. Penn State 10. Washington	<b>1954</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Wisconsin 3. Mississippi 4. Texas 5. Alabama 6. Arkansas 7. Louisiana State 8. Oklahoma 9. Penn State 10. Minnesota	<b>1954</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Texas 3. Southern Cal 4. Arkansas 5. Mississippi 6. Notre Dame 7. Penn State 8. Michigan 9. Nebraska 10. Stanford	<b>1954</b> 1. Nebraska 2. Notre Dame 3. Texas 4. Tennessee 5. Ohio State 6. Arizona State 7. Louisiana State 8. Stanford 9. Michigan 10. Auburn	<b>1954</b> 1. Alabama 2. Arkansas 3. Penn State 4. Oklahoma 5. Notre Dame 6. Michigan 7. Ohio State 8. Texas 9. Southern Cal 10. Nebraska	<b>1978</b> 1. Alabama 2. Southern Cal 3. Oklahoma 4. Penn State 5. Notre Dame 6. Clemson 7. Notre Dame 8. Nebraska 9. Texas 10. Houston
<b>1955</b> 1. UCLA 2. Oklahoma 3. Michigan 4. Ohio State 5. Maryland 6. Notre Dame 7. Army 8. Navy 9. Miami 10. Georgia Tech	<b>1955</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Michigan State 3. Maryland 4. UCLA 5. TCU 6. Ohio State 7. Georgia Tech 8. Notre Dame 9. Mississippi 10. Auburn	<b>1955</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Mississippi 3. Alabama 4. Oklahoma 5. Texas 6. Northwestern 7. Wisconsin 8. Arkansas 9. Navy 10. Ohio State	<b>1955</b> 1. Texas 2. Navy 3. Illinois 4. Pittsburgh 5. Auburn 6. Nebraska 7. Mississippi 8. Alabama 9. Michigan State 10. Oklahoma	<b>1955</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Nebraska 3. Texas 4. Michigan 5. Southern Cal 6. Auburn 7. Arkansas 8. Tennessee 9. Louisiana State 10. Oklahoma	<b>1955</b> 1. Nebraska 2. Oklahoma 3. Texas 4. Alabama 5. Penn State 6. Michigan 7. Georgia 8. Arizona State 9. Tennessee 10. Stanford	<b>1955</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Alabama 3. Oklahoma 4. Texas 5. Penn State 6. Purdue 7. Michigan 8. Nebraska 9. Notre Dame 10. Michigan State	<b>1979</b> 1. Alabama 2. Southern Cal 3. Oklahoma 4. Ohio State 5. Houston 6. Florida State 7. Pittsburgh 8. Arkansas 9. Nebraska 10. Purdue
<b>1956</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Michigan State 3. Notre Dame 4. Georgia Tech 5. Ohio State 6. Maryland 7. TCU 8. Michigan 9. Texas A&M 10. Pittsburg	<b>1956</b> 1. Oklahoma 2. Tennessee 3. Iowa 4. Georgia Tech 5. Texas A&M 6. Miami 7. Michigan 8. Syracuse 9. Michigan State 10. Oregon State	<b>1956</b> 1. Mississippi 2. Oklahoma 3. Illinois 4. Texas 5. Ohio State 6. Alabama 7. Washington 8. Auburn 9. Syracuse 10. Navy	<b>1956</b> 1. Alabama 2. Arkansas 3. Notre Dame 4. Michigan 5. Texas 6. Nebraska 7. Louisiana State 8. Oregon State 9. Ohio State 10. Southern Cal	<b>1956</b> 1. Nebraska 2. Colorado 3. Ohio State 4. Arkansas 5. Penn State 6. Oklahoma 7. Alabama 8. Southern Cal 9. Washington 10. Michigan	<b>1956</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Oklahoma 3. Texas 4. Nebraska 5. Auburn 6. Michigan 7. Alabama 8. Tennessee 9. Ohio State 10. Penn State	<b>1956</b> 1. Ohio State 2. Alabama 3. Pittsburgh 4. Southern Cal 5. Oklahoma 6. Arkansas 7. Nebraska 8. Houston 9. Purdue 10. Texas	<b>1980</b> 1. Georgia 2. Pittsburgh 3. Oklahoma 4. Michigan 5. Florida State 6. Alabama 7. Nebraska 8. Penn State 9. Notre Dame 10. North Carolina
<b>1957</b> 1. Auburn 2. Texas A&M 3. Michigan State 4. Minnesota 5. Tennessee 6. Michigan 7. Baylor 8. Pittsburgh 9. Iowa 10. Duke	<b>1957</b> 1. Auburn 2. Ohio State 3. Michigan State 4. Oklahoma 5. Navy 6. Iowa 7. Mississippi 8. Rice 9. Texas A&M 10. Notre Dame	<b>1957</b> 1. Nebraska 2. Texas 3. Notre Dame 4. Michigan 5. Alabama 6. Arkansas 7. Southern Cal 8. Louisiana State 9. Purdue 10. Ohio State	<b>1957</b> 1. Alabama 2. Michigan State 3. Arkansas 4. UCLA 5. Nebraska 6. Missouri 7. Tennessee 8. Louisiana State 9. Notre Dame 10. Southern Cal	<b>1957</b> 1. Southern Cal 2. Ohio State 3. Texas 4. Nebraska 5. Michigan 6. Alabama 7. Penn State 8. Notre Dame 9. Tennessee 10. UCLA	<b>1957</b> 1. Notre Dame 2. Ohio State 3. Oklahoma 4. Alabama 5. Penn State 6. Michigan 7. Nebraska 8. Southern Cal 9. Arizona State 10. Houston	<b>1957</b> 1. Michigan 2. Oklahoma 3. Notre Dame 4. Alabama 5. Southern Cal 6. Nebraska 7. Penn State 8. Pittsburgh 9. Texas 10. Georgia	<b>1981</b> 1. Clemson 2. Texas 3. Penn State 4. Pittsburgh 5. SMU 6. Georgia 7. Alabama 8. Miami 9. North Carolina 10. Washington



## **AP's Pre-Season Ratings Getting Tougher and Tougher**

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*Since the wire service began September predictions in 1932, college football has provided plenty of surprises.*

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**N**umber One. Has a nice ring to it, doesn't it. Whether you're talking about the rental car business, the arms race, class valedictorian or the national championship in college football, being No. 1 has a special meaning.

So it's little wonder that so much has been made over the votes of a few men each week during the football season every year since the Associated Press began its version of the national football championship in 1936.

Many things have changed since that first final Top 10 nearly five decades ago. The names, for instance. Minnesota, Santa Clara, Northwestern, Pennsylvania. Those were four of the powers in that 1936 final poll.

And the manner in which the AP conducts its voting now. Up until 1960 every sports editor of every newspaper, radio and television station who could count to 20 was involved in the process. Even with that seeming built-in advantage for schools in heavily populated areas like Big 10 Country, the East and the Pacific Coast, things were fairly fair. Texas Christian won it in 1938. And Texas A&M the following year. Iowa Pre-Flight slipped up there to No. 2 behind Notre Dame in 1943 when the War was playing havoc with the college game.

But, if truth be told, the Midwest did hog the honors a bit. The Big 10 schools won national championships seven times from 1936 through 1959. Notre Dame won it four other years. Army led the Eastern contingent with back-to-backs in 1944 and 1945, years when you'd hope West Point would have some good, tough lads. The Old South always seem to hang tough. In the 23 years from the start of the AP ratings until the change in format in 1960 the Southeast Conference teams appeared in the final Top 10 44 times. In the 21 years since they've been honored 46 times. That's some kind of consistency.

The Midwest, however, is by far the leader. In those first 23 years the Big 10 and Notre Dame hogged 68 Top 10 spots. In the past 21 years they've claimed 51 more. The East dominated in the early voting with 35 honorees, but has had only 21 since — and those mostly going to Penn State and Pitt.

After grabbing only 17 Top 10 finishes in the early going, the Big Eight has doubled that in the last 21 years. And the Southwest Conference has gone from 24 to 30. The Pacific Coast or Pac-8 or Pac-10 has been steady at 24 and 25, with the Atlantic Coast dropping from 12 to 6.

But what about the teams that make the forecasters look good? Or bad? Are there some schools that are safer bets than others year after year?

It would appear so. Oklahoma has been named in the pre-season Top 10 25 times since that first early poll in

1950. The Sooners have finished in the Top 10 22 times. And on 19 occasions OU has been in both the pre-season and final elite. Closest to the Big Red is the Crimson Tide from Alabama. The Southeast Conference power has been a pre-season pick 21 times, finished in the Top 10 21 times and in 17 years started and finished in both.

But Oklahoma either held or improved its pre-season position 16 times in 25 opportunities. Alabama did the same in 12 of its 21.

Ohio State has been a pre-season pick 21 times (five of those as the No. 1 team) and has finished in the Top 10 16 times. A dozen of those years the Buckeyes were in both pre and final. But they've been erratic. Twice they went from pre-season second 10 to No. 1. And twice they've done the reverse.

Alabama, oddly enough, has been given the pre-season vote of confidence only twice. The Tide went from first to third in 1966 and remained No. 1 in 1978. Oklahoma has been the pre-season choice five times and won it all on three of those occasions. The Sooners finished fourth and seventh the other two years. Voters like the kind of consistency those two Wishbone schools maintain.

One of the toughest schools for the prognosticators to pick has been Arkansas. Eight times the Hogs have been labeled Top 10 prime in the pre-season. Six times they've finished out of the elite after that vote of confidence. And nine of the times the Razorbacks have landed in the final Top 10 they were ignored in the advance warnings. In one stretch from 1977 through 1980, as an example, Arkansas went from nothing to three, two to 11, 20 to eight and six to back in the pack.

Nebraska has been a model of consistency in recent years. The Cornhuskers began a string of seven straight years in both the pre-season and final ratings in 1970 when they were tabbed ninth in September and first in January. Bob Devaney's crew pulled another mild surprise in 1971, picked second in pre-season and then winning a second straight national championship. Naturally, the voters finally became believers in 1972 and went all the way with Nebraska. The Huskers wound up fourth.

Notre Dame has won three national titles since the advent of the pre-season predictions. But the Fighting Irish have never won one when they were supposed to. Five times Notre Dame has left the rest of the country green with envy in September and then stepped aside for another giant. None of the forecasts have yet been able to gauge the luck of the Irish.

Texas and Penn State are two more of the forecasters favorites. The Longhorns, oddly enough, have never drawn enough support before the opening kickoff to be ranked No. 1. But they've won a pair of titles since the 1950 pre-season debut and they've been in the Top 10 then 20 times. Half of those they've finished in the elite and five other times did so after being ignored in pre-season. Penn State has been a September shoo-in 13 times and nine of those years wound up in the Top 10. The Nittany Lions made it in four other times and improved their initial position 10 times, although in four of the last six years the pickers have missed on them.

Michigan, last year's pre-season selection for the national title, has been put on the spot 15 times and has come through 10 of those, although in only six years did the Wolverines finish as high or higher than expected.

From the conference standpoints again, the Big 10 has rated the No. 1 pre-season vote nine times. Only Michigan State (in 1952) held up under that pressure. The Big Eight has been spotlighted eight times and won three of those years. Southeast Conference teams entered five seasons ranked No. 1 and finished two of two of those that way. Pacific Coast squads have failed in four straight tries at the double. And the only other pre-season pick for No. 1 — the only independent ever in the AP — was the 1960 Syracuse team, which finished 20th.

One the other end of the scale, the Southeast Conference has nine national titles to its credit since the pre-season ratings began. The Big Eight is second with six, followed by the Big 10 and independents with five each, the Pacific Coast with three and the ACC and Southwest with two each.

The idea of the pre-season poll by the AP (which coincided, by the way, with the start of the UPI poll in 1950) was not met with overwhelming acceptance by the coaches.

That first story with ratings in 1950 carried the following headline in the Sept. 21 *Tulsa World*: "Top-Ranking Coaches Scoff at AP Grid Poll". The reactions were predictable.

Oklahoma's Bud Wilkinson, whose team was ranked sixth in the pre-season after finishing second to Notre Dame the year before, said, "I wish we were half as good as the poll seems to indicate; there's no possibility that we can maintain that position. It's a great compliment to last year's team."

Wilkinson proved a better coach than forecaster. The Sooners won the first of five national championships that year.

Army was tabbed second in that poll behind Notre Dame. But Earl Blaik chided, "We are being ranked on what we were and not on what we are. You can't lose all but one of your offensive line and 21 lettermen without having to perform a major rebuilding job. Old Army sideliners are convinced that the '50 team is far below last year's standards."

But then what did old Army sideliners know back then anyway? The Cadets finished second behind Oklahoma.

Michigan's Bennie Oosterbaan came up with the classic "No comment." Some things never change at Michigan. Tennessee's Bob Neyland was upset. "I think fourth place is a ridiculous rating for us. We will be lucky to win half our games." Neyland and the Vols were more than lucky. They finished....well, fourth.

The pickers did another dandy job the following year, getting both of the top two teams right in Tennessee and Michigan State. And they hit it again in 1952 with Michigan State the choice over Maryland after those two had both finished unbeaten the year before. Then the voters decided to give Notre Dame a try again....and again. But the Irish let folks down in 1953 and 1954 with Maryland and Ohio State prevailing.

Oklahoma went through two unbeaten seasons in a row in 1954 and 1955 before the pollsters finally gave in and voted OU the pre-season choice in 1956. Wilkinson's team won 10 more games and made the poll look good. So they tried it again in 1957. This time Notre Dame fouled things up again, upsetting Oklahoma to snap a 47-game win streak. ●





Omaha Benson's Dave Hoppen

## ***Will Hoppen Become a Stipanovich for Huskers?***

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*Iba was excited about next basketball season already; three homebreds and two junior college recruits make prospects look "awfully good on paper."*

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**D**ave Hoppen doesn't really believe in idols, but if he had one, Nebraska's premier 1982 basketball recruit admits it would be Missouri's Steve Stipanovich.

"I've kept track of him since my sophomore year in high school," Hoppen said. "I made sure I listened to every Nebraska-Missouri game on the radio and I always watched when Missouri played on TV. My thinking was if I could be like him, I'd really be happy."

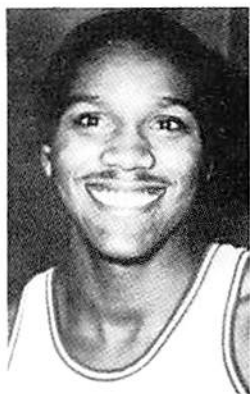
Now, of course, Hoppen won't have to look up to Stipanovich. The Cornhuskers' 6-11 Converse prep All-American will be staring him in the eye.

"I'm really looking forward to it, even if it is just for one year," Hoppen said. "Steve Stipanovich is more than just a name. He's an enemy."

Mizzou, one of dozens of big-name basketball schools which tried to recruit Hoppen, has won three consecutive Big Eight basketball championships since Stipanovich stepped on campus.

The Huskers are hoping Hoppen is the key to Nebraska's first Big Eight basketball championship in history. Nebraska has not had success with a home-grown big man since Schuyler produced Chuck Jura 14 years ago. Hoppen and Burke High School's 6-7 James Moore are also Nebraska's first recruits from Omaha since Creighton Prep's Mike Peterson 14 years ago.

The other members of the Huskers' five-man basketball recruiting class are 6-6 forward Mike Martz of Beatrice, 5-10 point guard David Ponce of North Idaho Junior College in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Stan Cloudy, a 6-4 first-team junior college All-American forward from Henderson County JC in Athens, Texas.



David Ponce



Stanley Cloudy



James Moore



Mike Martz

Hoppen, Ponce and Cloudy all appear to have excellent chances to contribute immediately.

"I don't want to sit here and say Hoppen is going to be a great player. I don't need to put that type of pressure on him," Iba said. "But he does have some things most big kids don't have — like great mobility, great lateral movement and great hands."

Of the half-dozen major college prospects in Nebraska this year, Iba said "if there's one player we needed, it was Hoppen, because of our center problem. I'm not saying that just because he committed to us, either. I said that long before he announced his intentions."

According to Iba, Hoppen is rated as one of the top centers in the country. In May, he and Marquette-bound Kerry Trotter were the only two Nebraskans named to the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Converse team, considered the most prestigious prep All-American team in the country.

"Some centers are rated above David, and a lot of the better ones are rated below him," Iba pointed out. "He's a true major college center. Ability-wise, he has all the tools to be there. He has good foot speed and good touch. And he's a great competitor. As a coach, he has everything you look for in an athlete."

Iba considers Stipanovich a natural measuring stick for talent. "They're the same size and the same type of players," he said. "When David matures, I think he'll be a bigger player. By that, I mean a more physical player. Of course, it all depends on his development and how hard he works."

Hoppen welcomes the comparison. "Stipanovich and I play a lot alike," he offered. "If you're comparing, I play more outside the basket on the free throw line. I think I might be a little

faster, but he can move. Down underneath, he likes to go straight up with the ball. He's very well trained. I don't think he's like Ralph Sampson. He's not impossible to cover. But he is very good. His record proves it. I'm really looking forward to playing against him."

Missouri Coach Norm Stewart was hoping Hoppen would be playing with Stipanovich, not against him. Mizzou and Notre Dame joined Nebraska as Hoppen's three finalists. He also visited Kentucky, Kansas and Colorado.

"I knew in December that Nebraska was the right choice," Hoppen said. "I've never looked back. I know I made the right choice."

He knows because of Iba's reputation for developing centers. "We put as much importance on the center position as anybody," Iba said. "The center has always been the hub of our offense. We get the ball to him to create situations for others and to create situations for himself."

That philosophy did not change, even when the Huskers were forced to use shorter pivots. At 6-7, Andre Smith was one of the shortest centers in major college basketball. Yet he was voted the 1981 Big Eight Player of the Year.

"We use the center more than anybody in our league...maybe more than anybody in the country," Iba said. "This year, even though we weren't blessed with a scoring center, we still got the ball to him. He's still the main man in our offense."

Missouri will testify to that. The Tigers needed a last-second shot to beat Nebraska by two points in Lincoln, were upset by the Huskers by 16 points in Columbia and went down to the final seconds before posting a five-point win over NU in the Big Eight Post-Season Tournament.

It was enough to convince Hoppen.

"I feel certain that Nebraska will be able to develop me as well as any program in the country," he said. "At Missouri, they already have two big men. Even though they told me they would be able to start all three of us, that probably wouldn't happen. With Notre Dame, you get all this talk about how they have nine guys in the pros. But none of them are centers. I looked at three great programs, three great coaches and three great schools. I just felt it was best to go to Nebraska."

Everything, Hoppen said, kept pointing to Lincoln. "Nebraska has had real good players over the past couple years, but no big men," he acknowledged. "I think the basketball program can be on par with the football program. I really don't expect to be a savior. I just want to play my game and help Nebraska win a championship. I don't know if I can play right away, but I know how hard I want to work and how much I want to contribute. I know people are expecting me to come in and play right away. All I know is I'm going all out after it."

Hoppen realizes Husker fans "are expecting a lot from me and I think that's good. It's great when everybody gets excited about basketball, even when it isn't basketball season."

Iba is hopeful that Hoppen will report this fall in stronger physical condition. Since signing his NU letter in mid-April, Hoppen has added 10 pounds and weighs 220. During the spring, he played in two Omaha basketball leagues and plans to play in two more this summer. In one of the summer leagues, he'll join future Nebraska teammates Terry Smith and Handy Johnson on the same team.

Martz, the first recruit to commit verbally to Nebraska last fall, predicts almost instant success for Hoppen. "He's a great player," Martz said. "I was sorry to see what happened to him



in the state semifinals against (state champion) Lincoln Northeast. But they had three guys around him the whole game. There wasn't much he could do. I've seen him play against the best in the country and hold his own. He was our leading scorer on that all-star team in Las Vegas last summer. He just dominated, going against some of the best big men in the nation."

While Hoppen struggled against Lincoln Northeast, Martz played one of his best games of the season against Nebraska's Class A champion. He scored 28 points and collected 15 rebounds in an 11-point loss. Northeast Coach Ed Johnson commented afterwards, that it "looked like Martz made every shot he took."

It was an exceptional game for a player on a sparsely-talented team. Beatrice finished 10-9 with Martz forced to play post most of the season. He averaged 19.8 points and 13.0 rebounds a game. "It was a tough year, team-wise," admitted Martz, who first caught the attention of major college recruiters in 1980.

As a sophomore, Martz averaged 15 points on a 15-5 team. Scouts noticed him in the district finals when they went

to see Lincoln East's Alex Stivrins, who went on to start two years for Creighton before transferring to Colorado. Beatrice lost to eventual state runner-up East, 72-69, with Martz scoring 27 points.

"That's the game that got me started because that was the first time the Nebraska coaches saw me," said Martz, who had the misfortune of playing on the second smallest school, enrollment-wise, in Class A.

Martz, however, is not discouraged, not even by the exodus of some of the state's best players to out-of-state schools. "They're all good players," he said. "But in my own mind, I feel I can play with anybody."

He also believes there's an advantage to not being as well-known. "If I got lost in the shuffle, that's okay," Martz said. "It takes the pressure off. It's an asset. Nobody's looking at what Mike Martz can do. But I think I can play. All I need to worry about is working my tail off and trying to learn from one of the best coaches in basketball."

Basically, Moore feels the same way. He did not announce his intentions to sign with Nebraska until several days before the national letter of intent day.

"I just wanted to relax and enjoy the season," said Moore, who averaged 17.8 points and 9.9 rebounds on Burke's state tournament team. "I felt there was plenty of time to look at the recruiting situation between the state tournament and the national letter of intent date. I didn't want to be squeezed into a commitment. I figured I didn't need a monkey on my back. I felt the later, the better."

Moore's low-key recruiting stance throughout the season was by the design of his high school coach, John Johnette. "James felt the more publicity he got, the greater monster he put on his back," Johnette said. "He just wants to go to school, be himself and help Nebraska win a Big Eight championship."

Johnette said Moore "leaned to Nebraska all along. He likes the program. He's a very disciplined and extremely coachable ball player. He stays within the frame-work of what you want to do at all times. He does not go off on his own tangent. He may not be as flamboyant as some other players. But championships are made out of five guys of his kind."

Moore, a rare three-year starter at Burke, averaged 10 rebounds a game for those three seasons. He also won the Metro Conference long jump championship as a junior and a senior.

"He's a versatile athlete," Johnette said. "He could play anything for us — guard, forward or center. Sometimes, we had to take him completely away from the basket and he still got in there and rebounded. He was always willing to get down and play away from the basket. He's very basic, very steady. He should fit right in. He'll do whatever Nebraska asks him to do."

Moore is glad his reputation does not match some of Nebraska's bigger prep basketball names. In that regard, he compares himself to Martz.

"Instead of coming in as All-Americans, thinking we have something to prove, we can come right in and play," Moore said. "We won't have that unnecessary pressure from the fans, who expect you to be a star from the word go. I'm not saying a lot of publicity is bad. I just think too much of it can cause some problems."

Less familiar names to Nebraska basketball fans are the two junior college signees, both of whom Iba considers potentially great players.

Ponce, the heir apparent to All-Big



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Eight guard Jack Moore, "is quicker than anybody we had on our team this year," Iba said. At North Idaho, the nation's 14th-ranked junior college team, Ponce averaged 12.9 points, 7.4 assists and 4.2 steals a game. He shot 53 percent from the field and 70 percent from the free throw line.

"I like being in control of the situation," Ponce said. "Things I can control, I do. Things I can't control, I've learned not to worry about."

North Idaho Coach Rolly Williams said size has never been a handicap for Ponce. "When I look at David, I don't think of weaknesses," he said. "He's a complete guard. He has speed, quickness and he jumps well. In 21 years, he's one of the best guards I've ever coached."

Ponce chose Nebraska over Idaho, a team that remained among the nation's top 10-rated basketball powers for most of this past season.

"He's exceptional at evaluating game circumstances. He knows when to speed it up, when to slow it down and who to get the ball to," Williams said of Ponce, who hit 9 of 11 field goals and handed out 12 assists against Ricks Junior College.

Guards from College of Southern Idaho were treated to an 8-for-12, eight assist display from Ponce. Chemeketa College watched Ponce give a 29-point, 10-assist clinic.

"He has ideal athletic perspective," said his coach. "He doesn't fluctuate that much. He has the great ability to function at the same level."

That ability was ignored by all major colleges when Ponce was graduated from high school in San Jose, Calif. Although he was voted MVP of the San Jose area and All-Central (California) Coast, Ponce was forced to walk on at the University of Portland, where he played infrequently as a freshman.

"I didn't see much future for me there other than just filling a uniform and being a cheerleader," he said. "I wanted to go to another university, but an ex-high school teammate talked me into North Idaho. I didn't even know it existed."

"At first, it was hard for me to accept, dropping down to a junior college. It was like telling myself that I wasn't good enough for Division I. But then I looked at the other side of the coin — I'd get to play every day. I wish I'd have gone here my freshman year, too."

Ponce believes a junior college player transferring to a major college has an advantage over players coming directly from high school. "Sure, the other guy has been with the program longer," he said. "But the JC guy has all that playing experience. That's a big advantage."

The same should be true for Cloudy, the 6-4 forward from Henderson County. "Stan's been a winner since high school. I'm sure he'll help make Nebraska a winner, too," said Leon Spencer, Cloudy's junior college coach.

"The fans love him here. They'll love him there, too," Spencer promised.

Iba, obviously, hopes all five 1982 recruits are coach's dreams. "I was excited about next year's team before we recruited anybody," he said. "Now I'm even more excited."

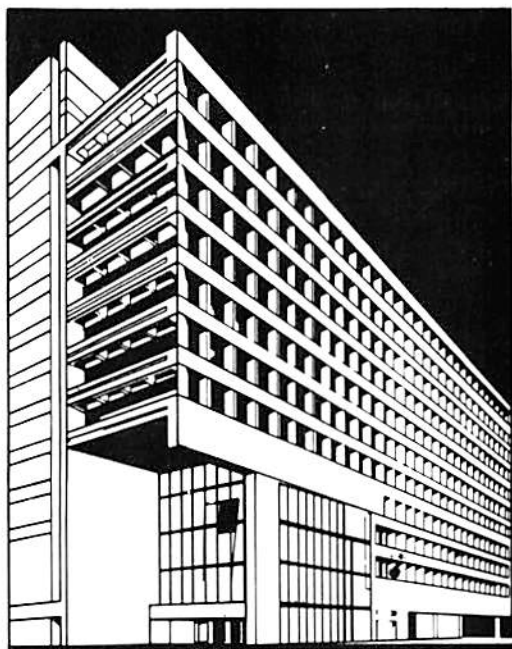
Iba is so excited, he doesn't even downplay talk of a Big Eight championship team in 1983. "Personnel-wise, I see us having as good a chance as anybody," he said. "Of course, it depends on how everybody fits together. But it looks awfully good on paper. We got what we went after. We filled our needs."●

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Reading, Pa., boy Chris Riegel, nation's top ranked high school gymnast joins the Huskers in '82.

## Top-Ranked Prep Gymnasts To Replace Hartung, Elliott

support. There seems to be a gymnastics fever in Lincoln."

Riegel, 5-7, 140 pounds and only three months past his 17th birthday, also visited Oklahoma, Arizona State and New Mexico.

"It's been a heckuva year," Allen said. "The only way I'd want to lose Jim Hartung and Steve Elliott would be to sign the top two high school gymnasts in the country. And that's what we did with Chris Riegel and Wes Suter."

Suter, from Reston, Va., made up his mind to sign with Nebraska a month earlier. "I've been impressed with Nebraska since I visited during the Japanese meet last December," he said. "I'm looking forward to working out with guys better than I am."

Suter, considered the nation's No. 2 prep gymnast behind Riegel, also visited Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and Southern Connecticut.

Nebraska baseball Coach John Sanders also announced the signings of two of the nation's top prep baseball prospects — Bill McGuire, a catcher from Omaha Creighton Prep and Bob Kipper, a left-handed pitcher from Central Catholic High School in Aurora, Ill.

McGuire committed to the Huskers in mid-April and Kipper signed with Nebraska in May. Both were considered prime targets for the major league baseball free agent draft in June.

Some scouts believe Kipper may even be a candidate for a top-five selection in the free agent draft because of his 97 mile-an-hour fast ball.

"I'm happy with my choice of

Nebraska," said Kipper, who is 6-2 and 175 pounds. "I visited Nebraska last and when I saw their facilities, I knew that none of the others compared. I felt really comfortable with the coaching staff and I like the players on the team."

This spring, Kipper was unbeaten for his high school team and pitched one 30-inning stretch without allowing an earned run.

McGuire, 6-3 and 210 pounds, is "one of the top 10 receivers in the country at the high school level," Sanders said. That belief seems to have been shared by many of the top baseball programs in the country. The list of those recruiting McGuire included Arizona State, Arizona, Miami, Florida State, South Florida, Southern Cal, Mississippi State and Alabama.

Sanders never took McGuire for granted. "It's important for people in Nebraska to realize what kind of player we're talking about," he said. "Billy's a young man with a lot of options. We knew two years ago that if he made normal progress, he could become a major league prospect."

Last season, McGuire led Creighton Prep to the state high school championship and helped Nebraska Federal reach the American Legion national tournament. Those teams, essentially comprised of the same players, produced a combined 90-11 record. McGuire hit .428, with 14 home runs and 112 runs batted in.

Nebraska track Coach Frank Sevine kept pace with the high-powered recruiting theme, signing five outstanding athletes to national letters of intent. They include:

**F**or the fifth time in five years, Nebraska gymnastics Coach Francis Allen has recruited the nation's No. 1-ranked high school gymnast. Allen breathed a huge sigh of relief the last week in April when Chris Riegel of Reading, Pa., chose Nebraska over UCLA.

"It was a dead heat, weighing the pros and cons between the two schools," Riegel said. "Finally, I decided to drop the pros and cons and something just drew me to Nebraska. I don't know what. It could be the super power team."

"It was UCLA's weather, new facility and prime television market against Nebraska's powerhouse gymnastics and media support," Riegel said. "I guess I just dropped everything and went back to the basics — good old gymnastics. From what I've seen, Nebraska has, by far, the best fan

— Ralph Preiman, a sophomore pole vaulter from Foothills Community College in Los Altos, Calif. Sevigne called Preiman "One of the top prospects in the country" after he vaulted 17-6 in an invitational meet earlier this year. He also set a national junior college record with a 17-4½ vault.

— Gerrard O'Callaghan, a distance runner from County Cork, Ireland. O'Callaghan, who competed at the Christian Brothers Prep School, has bests of :52 in the 400 meters, 1:53.1 in the 800 meters, 3:54 in the 1,500, 4:13.3 in the mile and 8:32.3 in the 3,000.

— Kim Taylor Hansen, from Horsens, Denmark. Hansen ran a 20-kilometer road race in 60:40, which would have tied him for sixth in the 1981 U.S. rankings and is only 13 seconds slower than the best time recorded by Bill Rodgers last year.

— Vernon Massey, a high jumper from Central High School in Aurora,

Colo. Massey is the defending Junior Olympic high jump champion and placed second in the Junior Olympic high hurdles. His best marks are 7¾ in the high jump, :14.0 in the high hurdles, 23-5 in the long jump and 48-0 in the triple jump.

— Mike Schnebel, a Nebraska weight specialist from Fremont. Before the state track meet, Schnebel had posted bests of 59-4¼ in the shot put and 180-7 in the discus.

Nebraska wrestling Coach Bob Fehrs also announced the signings of four recruits. They include:

— Matthew Campbell, a 118-pounder from Havre, Mont. He compiled a 139-2 prep record en route to four consecutive state championships. Twice, he has won the outstanding wrestler award in the Joliet (Ill.) International Invitational. Last summer, he won the 114.5-pound division of the National Sports Festival in Syracuse, N.Y. Nebraska

outrecruited Oklahoma and Arizona State.

— Scott Sabo, a 190-pounder from Grandville, N.Y. Twice, he was the New York state runner-up, this past season with a 34-2 record at 210 pounds.

— Jake Sabo, a 158-pounder from Grandville, N.Y. Ten months younger than brother Scott, he had a 119-9 career high school record. He won the 1981 Joliet International at 163 pounds. He also captured the American Grand National in the same weight class at Lincoln last summer. He's another National Sports Festival champion.

— John Dehart, a 150-pounder from Chesterton, Ind. He won 89 of 103 prep matches and was the 1982 Indiana state high school champion at 155 pounds after finishing runner-up as a junior. Dehart also won the National Sports Festival at Colorado Springs. He finished second in the Joliet International the past two years.●



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# Inside Husker Sports

In her second year as coach after jumping to Nebraska from Oregon, Nancy Plantz's Lady Huskers softball team won its first Big Eight championship. In style.

Nebraska swept through four games in the tournament in Norman, Okla., without giving up a run: Oklahoma 2-0, Iowa State 9-0, Missouri 1-0 in 14 innings and Missouri 1-0 in eight innings in the championship game.

Although no MVP was awarded, pitcher Jeanne Wagner had to be the unofficial winner. The junior transfer, who was a junior college all-American at Kirkwood, Iowa, Junior College, won three games — Oklahoma and both Missouri games. After pitching the entire 14 innings against Mizzou, Jeanne came back in relief in the fifth inning of the title game and did not allow a hit the rest of the way.

Joining Wagner on the all-tourney team were first baseman Rhonda Revelle, centerfielder Cindy Aerni and shortstop Denise Day.

Revelle, a junior who transferred with her coach from Oregon, entered the tournament batting only .116 but hit .384 in the four games. She doubled to lead off the eighth in the final game, then yielded to pinch runner Kelly Erisman, who scored the winning run with a cast on her broken arm.

Aerni, a junior from Columbus who walked on from Platte J.C., hit .312 in the tournament and singled in the winner in the finale.

Day, a freshman shortstop from South Williamsport, Pa., managed only three hits in 14 trips, but one of them drove in the only run in the 14-inning game.

## More softball...

In the Creighton tournament, Nebraska outlasted Northeast Missouri State, 2-1, in 22 innings, with Wagner pitching the last 18 2/3 innings in relief, striking out 19 and giving up three hits.

Fifteen minutes later, the Lady Huskers knocked off Big 10 Champion Northwestern, 5-0, on soph Sandy Wolterman's no-hitter.

## Husker freshman swimming star

Cliff Looschen, who picked up six gold medals in the Big Eight championships, is training this summer with the Mission Viejo Nadadores in California instead of returning home to Cocoa Beach, Fla. The Nadadores are the perennial United States Swimming (USS) champions.

Looschen is staying with Laguna Niguel obstetrician Harvey Fair, who swam for the Huskers from 1956-60.

"It's a good opportunity," Nebraska Coach Cal Bentz said. "The Nadadores need some help in the backstroke, and it will be a good chance for Cliff to train for long course meets. And there are several foreign trips with the team."

Boyd Epley, whose reputation is widespread as director of the Nebraska strength program, is taking the show on the road.

Epley and his staff will conduct "Husker Power Clinics" for high school athletes across Nebraska this summer.

The sessions will be June 13-19 in Lincoln, June 20-July 3 in Omaha, July 4-10 in a northeast region, July 11-24 in the southeast region and July 25-31 in the western region.

"We made the announcement about the clinics during a high school coaches clinic the weekend of the spring game and had 35 sign up on the spot," Epley said.

"A lot of coaches have requested a strength clinic over the years, and since I had been heavily involved in the summer football camp, we didn't. Now we are," Epley said.

The clinics will involve testing and competition for youngsters in grades 9-10 and 11-12. Medals will be awarded, and winners will be invited to Lincoln later in the summer for





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what Epley calls the state "Athletic Index" competition.

"It's sort of like the decathlon, with points awarded for levels of performance in each event. It's the same type of system we use in evaluating athletes in our winter conditioning program," he said.

Huskers are graded in seven events. Clinic testing will include the 40-yard dash, vertical jump, agility run and two-hand seated shot put. The latter event "identifies explosive upper body strength," Epley said.

"The Athletic Index has tremendous potential. High school coaches will be able to evaluate junior high athletes, college coaches will be able to evaluate high school athletes and pro coaches will be able to evaluate college athletes," he said.

Epley's plan is to develop a national Athletic Index program.

The fee for the clinics is \$5.

**Nebraska senior basketball guard** Jack Moore was rewarded for his three years of leadership when he became the 14th recipient of the Frances Pomeroy-Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame Award in May.

Moore received the award as the nation's outstanding senior player under six feet during an Enshrinement Day luncheon at the Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass.

The all-Big Eight guard from Muncie, Ind., was called "the most dominant small guard I've ever seen," by Colorado Coach Tom Apke, who faced Moore for three years with his teams at Creighton and C.U.

Moore finished as Nebraska's No. 7 all-team scorer (1,204 points) and No. 2 nationally with a career free throw percentage of .901.

Moore joined 5-10 NBA Hall of Fame inductee Slater Martin for a picture-taking session following the luncheon.

#### Names you may know:

**Al Maxey**, an all-Big Eight Nebraska basketball player in the late 1950s, was inducted with Oscar Robertson, Clyde Lovellette and Robert Leonard into the Indianapolis Hall of Fame at the silver anniversary awards ceremony.

**Al**, a Lincoln police lieutenant and active masters distance runner, was cited for his accomplishments at

All-tournament Huskers and championship trophy, from left, Wagner, Revelle, Day and Aerni.



**Indianapolis Crispus Attucks High.** His teams won the state championship as a junior and finished second as a senior. He was named the Star of All-Stars in the annual Kentucky-Indiana all-star game in 1957.

**Joe American Horse**, one of Frank Sevigne's first distance recruits (1957) out of Gordon, Neb., has been elected chairman of the Oglala Sioux Indian Tribe, overseeing tribal operations on the 2 million-acre Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Former District Judge **Ernest A. Hubka** of Beatrice died at 84. He was the Cornhusker football captain in 1918 and lettered in basketball, baseball and track.

Vice Chancellor **Robert Rutford** received a special award for his contributions to Husker swimming and diving during the team's awards banquet.

CONTINUED ON 62

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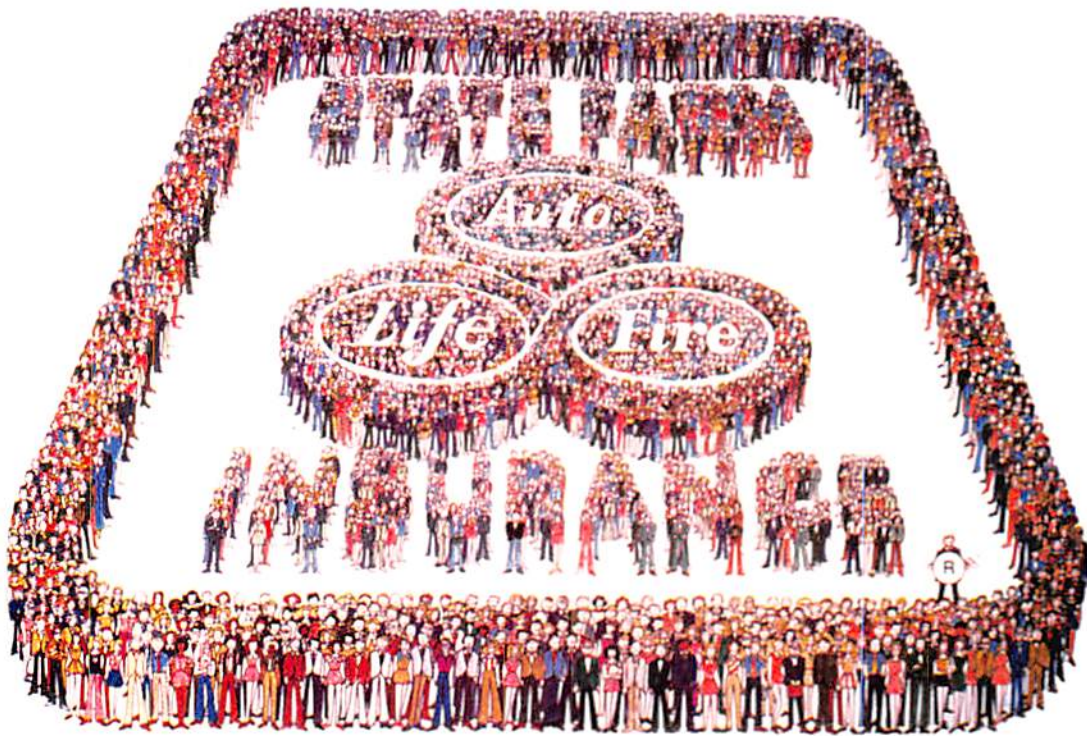
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## Gill

CONTINUED FROM 27

thought if I wasn't doing the job, they'd take me out," Barnett said.

Barnett played the entire game and paid a dear price. The calf hemorrhaged into his right ankle, and the pressure blocked the nerves to his right foot. His toes began to go numb, just as Gill's had done. Time was precious. The following Sunday, surgeons made two small incisions and inserted tubes to drain the blood.

The operation was unsuccessful, and three days later, Barnett's leg was split open four inches below his knee. The incision stretched 14 inches to his ankle. It wasn't closed completely for a week.

As with Gill, there was uncertainty about the extent to which Barnett had suffered nerve damage. The recovery would take time, the doctors said. Time heals most things.

In early May, Barnett had healed enough to participate in the Dolphins' mini-camp.

Gill and Barnett talked with each other about their injuries, though, "not in deep detail," said Gill.

Each athlete had to deal with his injury in his own way, but there was some reassurance in knowing that another football player had faced the same trials and tribulations.

"I've told Turner to just not give up on it," Barnett said. "It's just something that's real slow. Unlike most injuries, you can't see any progress for several weeks. It's easy to get frustrated. Then you'll notice some movement."

Barnett participated in all of the drills during the Dolphins' spring camp although tests showed the strength in his ankle and foot were no better than 70 percent of normal. "I wasn't happy with my times (in the 40-yard dash), and I could feel it while cutting, but I was able to practice. The neurologist said you can expect progress from a year to a year and a half.

"Apparently mine wasn't as severe as Turner's. I never got drop foot, but I couldn't lift my big toe, and I didn't

have any strength to support my ankle," he said.

When such an injury first occurs, Barnett said, "It's scary. You know a knee can go at any time, but this is such an odd type of injury. It's like finding out you have a rare disease. Something like this, you've never even heard of it.

"At first, you don't even think about football. You just wonder, 'Can I ever walk right again?' "

For Turner Gill, there is little left, just the waiting. He tries not to think about what has happened, but curious well-wishers ask about his health and his progress and "I start thinking about it all over again," he said. Gill's injury has been as much a topic of conversation, when Nebraska football is the subject, as Dave Rimington's Outland Award or the more than 2,000 rushing yards by I-backs Roger Craig and Mike Rozier.

Talk of Gill's dramatic rehabilitation drew as much attention as the occasional use of Craig at fullback during spring drills. The outlook for next football season invariably includes the

stipulation that Gill must be healthy if Nebraska is to repeat as Big Eight champion.

There can be no avoiding the questions or the thoughts.

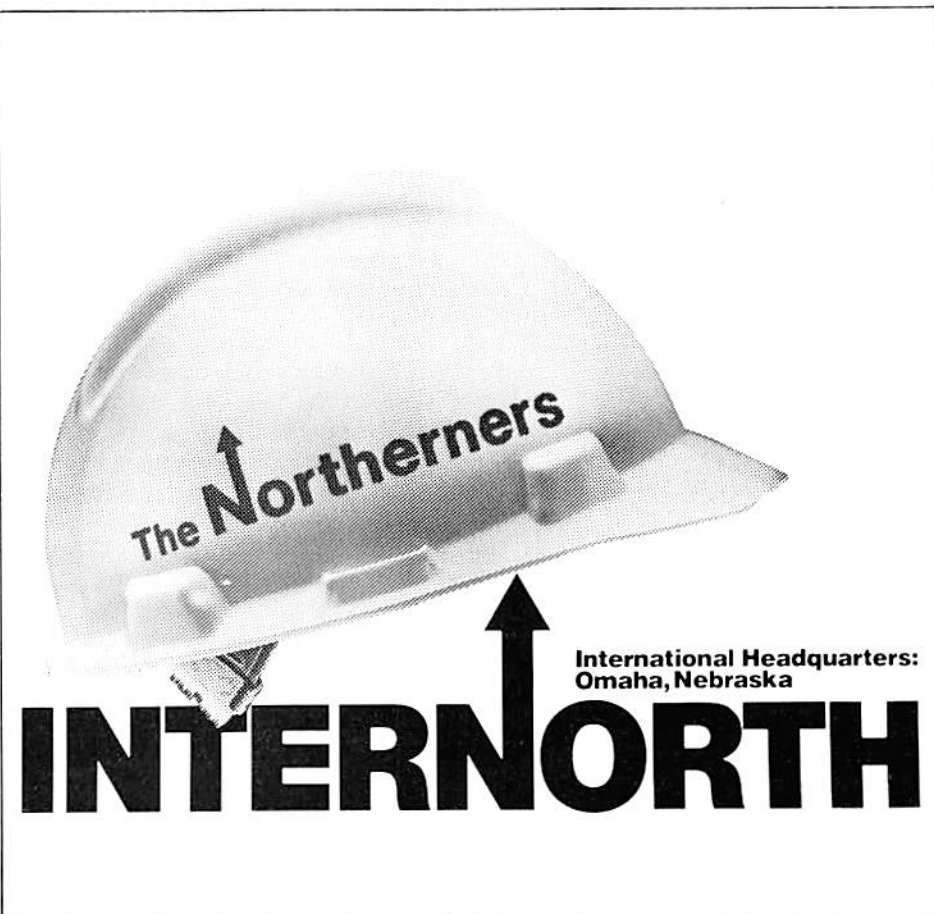
"I ran pretty well in the spring, but there are still going to be some doubts until I get in a game and get hit," Gill said. "There's no sense trying to fool myself.

"I'll get hit in scrimmages during the (pre-season) fall (camp), but it won't be the same as a game."

Just a few months ago, such talk would have sounded like foolish optimism, but after his visit to New Orleans, Turner Gill knew it was only a matter of time. The people who wrote the letters knew that, too. They believed, and it's all happening just the way they said it would.

Turner's dad captured the essence, just after Turner's second surgery. "These are hard times," he said. "But Nebraska is a good place to be. Nebraska fans are wonderful.

"I'll never forget them as long as I live."●







*Krenk receives "Lifter of Year" award from Osborne.*

## Krenk Reassigns Priorities

Things were running along so smoothly for Mitch Krenk.

The upcoming senior from Nebraska City was running dead even for the tight end job with Jamie Williams during the first week of spring football drills.

He had noticed that the middle toe on his right foot was enlarged, and the toenail was deformed. But there had been no pain.

After the first Wednesday scrimmage, during passing drills, Krenk took a short pass on an under pattern, cut upfield and heard the toe pop. There was instant pain.

X-rays were taken before the next practice on Friday. Then he went out and practiced.

Before the Saturday scrimmage Coach Tom Osborne asked him how he felt. Krenk told him the toe was sore. "He told me to go on in; there was no sense in hurting it and losing me for the rest of the spring," Krenk said.

While his teammates were scrimmaging, Krenk looked at the x-rays with Dr. Charles Newman and was told the tip of the bone was dead and would have to be removed. He was assured his balance wouldn't be affected.

After getting a second opinion, Krenk figured "it was a pretty minor thing and I'd be back for the last two weeks of spring ball. I said 'Let's get it done.'"

He checked into the hospital at 5:30 a.m. ("That was the toughest part") and checked out at 12:30 p.m. He returned to practice on Monday of the final week.

Things were looking up again. On Wednesday, his teammates elected him "Lifter of the Year" for his dedication in the weight room, and Osborne presented the award in ceremonies after practice.

That Friday, he was summoned to Osborne's office. "I thought I was in trouble for something. I didn't know what I'd done," he said.

Osborne told him tests had revealed a malignant tumor in the toe. "I'm sure it was hard for him to tell me," Krenk said. "At first I was stunned. I knew it meant cancer, but I didn't know what kind."

He watched the spring game the next day "in a daze" and left Monday for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. "They run you through the tests

quick," he said.

The rest of the toe was removed on Wednesday. The news was all good.

"They got it all the first time. The tests showed no malignancy. This type of cancer shows up in the bones or lungs. The tests were all good," Krenk said.

"With this type of cancer, the danger period is 1½ years," he said. He was assured that the odds of it recurring were slight.

As a precaution, he will return to Rochester every three months for some time for a bone scan and have x-rays of his lungs every six weeks. "That's not too bad a price to pay," he said.

Krenk returned to Lincoln on a Sunday night, and he hobbled on crutches Monday morning to the weight room for a workout.

Football, however, had been reassigned to a lower priority.

"Football is definitely not your main concern. This helps you get your priorities right. I know I won't worry about getting beat out of a position anymore.

"And I won't complain about two-a-days (practices) this fall," he said. •



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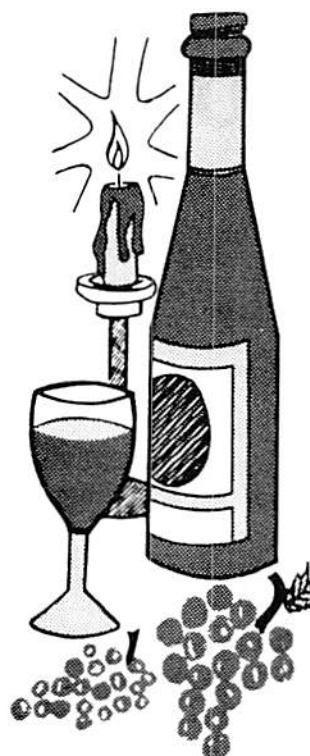


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Nebraska's women, far under strength because of injuries, won their third consecutive Big Eight championship while the men's team slipped from second to seventh in the combined conference outdoor track meet in Norman, Okla.

The Lady Huskers edged OU 145-127 while the men managed only 43 points, four out of the cellar, to champ Kansas' 106.

World-class sprinter Merlene Ottey successfully defended her 100 and 200-meter titles, establishing new conference records and contributed legs on record-setting 4x100 and sprint medley relay teams.

Ottey was joined in the winner's circle by Rhonda Blanford with a record in the 100 hurdles, Tammy Essington in the 800 and Robin Small in the discus.

Shotputter Joe Staub was Nebraska's lone champion for the men.

The Touchdown Club of Nebraska re-elected **Robert Allen** of Hastings as president. Other officers of the booster organization are **William Mueller** of Ogallala, vice president; **Paul Schorr III** of Lincoln, secretary, and **Lou Roper** of Lincoln, treasurer.

Elected to three-year terms on the board were **Dr. Kirk Lewis** of Omaha, **Charles Wright** of Lincoln, **Lyell Bremser** of Omaha, **Richard Huber** of Grand Island and **Dr. Norman Carlson** of Lincoln.

**Pat Fischer**, former Husker defensive back and son of Line Coach Clete, has moved on to take a job as football coach at Leander, Tex., High after one year as head coach at Hastings. Pat served as an assistant at Nebraska, Weber State, Kansas State and Millard High.

**The three basketball seniors** — Jack Moore, Ray Collins and Jerry Shoecraft — shared the MVP award at the Rebounders Club banquet. Junior Claude Renfro was named the most improved player.

**Todd Spratte**, a promising linebacker with hard luck, was forced to retire during spring football after his sophomore season. The Rochester, Minn., native underwent two operations on his left knee, and one on his right and one on his shoulder. "I was getting pretty discouraged," he said after his knee gave out again on the second day of drills.

Spratte was the third victim last fall of "L-1", which is the first position left of the kicker on the kickoff coverage team. L-1 is the wedge buster, or kamikaze position, as the players call it. Linebacker Jim Korbeil opened the season at L-1, but an injury ended his career. Middle guard Ken Graeber was next. He was granted an extra year under a hardship ruling after surgery. Then came Spratte. End Bill Weber ended the season at L-1.

**Nebraska 198-pounder Bill Scherr** won the AAU National Freestyle Championship at the Bob Devaney Sports Center to become the first NU national wrestling champ since 1971. Heavyweight Gary Albright finished third and Al Freeman and Jim Scherr fifth to give the Husker team a fifth-place finish, highest ever.

Bill Scherr also was awarded the Grand Championship ring by the United States Wrestling Foundation. The ring goes annually to the wrestler earning the most points in the USWF meets during the year.

**The first annual Husker-Coors Jogathon**, a fund-raising event for women's athletics held the morning of the spring football game, netted pledges of \$8,200.

"Stay tuned for the second annual," said Joyce Johnson, administrative assistant for women's athletics.

Gov. Charles Thone and Lincoln Mayor Helen Boosalis headed the list of celebrities as 190 entrants participated on the Ed Weir track. Pledges were solicited for each lap covered ("run, jog, walk, crawl").

The women's softball team was the biggest fund raiser, and Regy Green was the top individual, Johnson said.

Lincoln policeman Al Maxey covered 38 laps of the quarter-mile track. Assistant Basketball Coach Tom Baack ran 34 (8½ miles), Football Coach Tom Osborne 33, Women's Athletic Director, Dr. June Davis 31, Football Assistant George Darlington 29, Assistant Women's AD Barb Hibner and Football Assistant Gene Huey 26.

Athletic Director Bob Devaney logged 18, not all of them running.

"We're getting a lot of positive input. The support of the men's program shows we're together," Johnson said. ●



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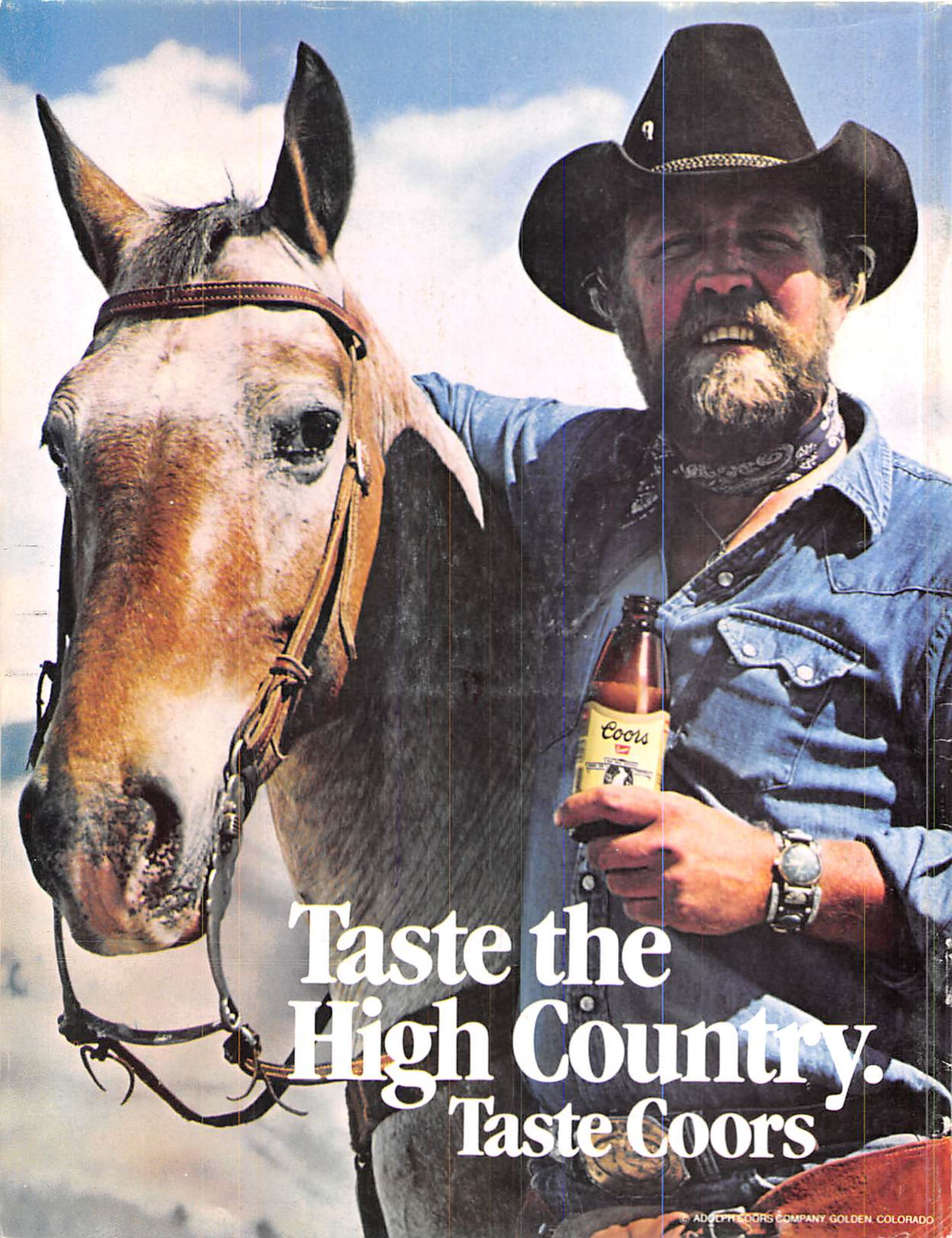
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